NATION

11K litres of milk poured into Narmada, greens see red

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BUSINESS

Markets rebound 1% on buying in financial counters

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SPORTS

Pressure on Samson as CSK extend search for 2 points

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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— PTI

10 dead, several missing after boat capsizes in Yamuna

MATHURA, 10 APRIL

A tourist boat, mainly carrying visitors from Punjab, capsized in the Yamuna River near Kesi Ghat in Vrindavan on Friday afternoon, resulting in at least 10 fatalities and several missing persons, officials confirmed. The accident occurred when the boat, with over two dozen tourists onboard, hit a floating pontoon after entering deeper waters. Officials noted that a recently dismantled pontoon bridge left some pontoon drums in the river, with the boat believed to have collided with one of them. Eyewitnesses said the boat swayed violently due to gusty winds, increased its speed, and collided with a pontoon bridge, causing it to overturn. Officials clarified the boat struck a floating pontoon left after the bridge was dismantled. Police and local authorities are conducting rescue operations, with senior officials monitoring the situation. —PTI

84L added in UP SIR, total voters rise to 13.39 cr

LUCKNOW, 10 APRIL

Uttar Pradesh's electorate grew by over 84 lakh to 13.39 crore after the completion of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), according to the final voter list published on Friday.

Addressing a press conference at the Lok Bhawan Media Centre here, UP Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said the SIR was conducted from 27 October 2025 to 10 April 2026, covering all the 75 districts, 403 Assembly constituencies and polling stations.

He said the 166-day exercise was carried out with the help of 75 district election officers (DEOs), 403 electoral registration officers (EROs), 12,758 assistant EROs (AEROs), 18,026 booth level officer (BLO) supervisors and 1,77,516 BLOs.

In addition, 5,82,877 booth level agents of recognised political parties and crores of voters extended cooperation, he said, adding that print, electronic and digital media also played a key role in raising awareness.

- The number of voters in the 18-19 age group stood at 3,33,981, while the gender ratio was 824 female voters per 1,000 male voters.

Rinwa said the draft electoral roll published on January 6, had 12,55,56,025 voters, including 6.88 crore male voters, 5.67 crore female voters and 4,119 third gender voters.

The number of voters in the 18-19 age group stood at 3,33,981, while the gender ratio was 824 female voters per 1,000 male voters.

The final electoral roll published on 10 April shows the total number of voters as 13,39,84,792, he said.

Of these, males number 7,30,71,071 (around 54 per cent), females 6,09,09,525 (45.46 per cent) and third gender voters 4,206 (less than 0.01 per cent).

The number of voters in the 18-19 age group has risen to 17,63,360, accounting for 1.32 per cent of the electorate. —PTI

Uttar Pradesh's Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa

US, Iran prep for talks in Pak as truce holds

Peace in Lebanon must: Iran amid Vance's threats

DUBAI, 10 APRIL

Negotiators from Iran and the US began preparing for high-level talks in Pakistan on Saturday, even as the ceasefire remained shaky on Friday.

There remain many issues that could derail the truce, even as no US-Israeli strikes were reported on Iran.

Iran's Parliament Speaker **Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf** said on X that the talks wouldn't happen unless there was a ceasefire in Lebanon and that Iran's blocked assets were released. He said that these were previously agreed upon terms for the ceasefire announced on Wednesday.

US President Donald Trump complained that that Iran was

"doing a very poor job" by not allowing the free flow of ships through the Strait of Hormuz, also a condition that Washington insisted upon.

Meanwhile, US Vice President **JD Vance**, who was departing from Washington to Islamabad said he hoped the negotiations would be "successful" but warned that it could be easily derailed if the Iranians did not negotiate in "good faith".

"If they're gonna try and play us, then they're gonna find that the negotiating team is not that receptive," he said, adding that Trump has given "clear guidelines" on how the talks should go, without elaborating.

It is unclear who is leading the Iranian team.

Meanwhile, Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu said that he authorised direct negotiations with Lebanon "as soon as possible" after the US said Beirut was not included in the deal with Iran. It is unclear where the talks will take place.

Strikes from Wednesday have killed at least 300 people, and continued on Friday, where at least 12 people were killed.

Kuwait said it faced a n Iranian drone attack, which Tehran denied. —*Agencies*

>>>*More on Pgs 2, 4, 5, 6 ,7*

MEA voices concern over deaths in Lebanon

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

India on Friday voiced "deep concern" over rising civilian casualties in Lebanon amid intensified Israeli strikes, even as it sought to secure energy supplies from Qatar during heightened West Asia tensions.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the situation in Lebanon was "very disturbing", particularly for India as a troop contributor to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). At least 300 people were killed in Israeli air strikes on Wednesday, according to Lebanese authorities.

India emphasised the need to protect civilians and uphold international law, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. The remarks come amid uncertainty over a fragile US-Iran ceasefire, with Tehran asserting that Lebanon is covered under the deal, a claim disputed by the US and Israel.

New Delhi said it remained engaged with Gulf nations, pointing to Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri's visit to Qatar and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's upcoming trip to the UAE. India also said its embassy in Lebanon was in close contact with the Indian community.

QATAR VOWS TO REMAIN INDIA'S ENERGY SUPPLIER

Separately, Qatar assured India it would remain a "reliable energy supplier" during talks between Puri and QatarEnergy chief Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi in Doha. Both sides welcomed the April 8 ceasefire and stressed the need for uninterrupted energy flows and freedom of navigation through key routes. —PTI

AFTER CASH FOUND AT HOUSE

Justice Varma quits amid impeachment proceedings

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Embattled Allahabad High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma has resigned from office, bringing an abrupt end to impeachment proceedings initiated against him following the discovery of burnt wads of currency at his official residence last year.

Justice Varma submitted his resignation to President Droupadi Murmu on April 9, stating it was done with "deep anguish". His departure renders the ongoing removal proceedings in Parliament infructuous.

"While I do not propose to burden your august office with the reasons… it is with deep anguish that I hereby tender my resignation… It has been an honour to serve in this office," the 57-year-old judge wrote in his letter.

The controversy dates back to the night of March 14, 2025, when a fire broke out at Justice Varma's Lutyens' Delhi residence — then serving as a judge of the Delhi High Court — prompting firefighters to respond. During the operation, personnel reportedly discovered a large stash of burnt currency notes, triggering a major judicial and political storm. Calling himself a victim of a vilification campaign, Varma has withdrawn from an inquiry being conducted by a Lok Sabha-appointed panel for his impeachment, saying his continued participation would legitimise an earlier inquiry, where he was asked to "answer the unanswerable" question on the source of money found from his Delhi residence. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 4*

11 ARRESTD

ISI module using CCTV to track Indian Army routes busted

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

An espionage network with direct links to Pakistan has been unearthed, revealing how handlers across the border remotely monitored real-time movement of Indian Army personnel through a surveillance network.

A covert grid of solar-powered CCTV cameras was installed at strategically sensitive locations in north Indian cities including Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Pathankot, Patiala and Moga in Punjab, Ambala in Haryana, Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir, and Bikaner and Alwar in Rajasthan -- all of which are crucial due to the presence of Army cantonments, proximity to the international border and their role as major troop movement and logistics corridors.

These devices were transmitting live footage directly to Pakistan-based handlers.

The module, busted by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police in a coordinated operation, led to the arrest of 11 accused involved in espionage, arms smuggling and reconnaissance activities.

The accused are Manpreet Singh, a resident of Punjab's Tarn Taran; Anmol and Sahil of Punjab's Firozpur; Atul Rathee, Rohit and Ajay from Delhi; Gurjeet of Kapurthala; Rimpledeep of Fazilka; Salwinder alias Kalu and Boota Singh of Punjab's Fazilka and Harpreet of Punjab's Moga.

Singh was in direct contact with Pakistan-based handlers and played a central role in coordinating communication and facilitating the movement of illegal arms.

Investigators said the network was operating under instructions from Pakistan's intelligence agency.

The footage was analysed by handlers in Pakistan to map patterns, assess vulnerabilities and potentially plan further activities.

The police said the bust has averted a major security threat, as inputs suggest that the module was exploring plans to target security establishments using explosives and other means. —*PTI*

Missing Kerala student found dead near Chikkamagaluru hills

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 10 APRIL

Three days after a Class 10 student from Kerala went missing during a family trip to Manikyadhara Falls in the Chandradrona hill range here, she was found dead on Friday.

The deceased, Kumari Shrinanda, had been missing since 7 April after she went trekking in the Chandradrona hills.

"The body has been traced, and the clothes she was wearing are intact. The body will be sent for a post-mortem, and further procedures are underway," Chikkamagaluru superintendent of police Jitendra Kumar Dayama said. Police said the girl's body, first spotted with the help of a drone camera, was found in a deep gorge estimated to be over 1,500 feet near the waterfall. An investigation is underway to determine whether the death was due to an accidental fall into the gorge or some other cause. The girl was part of a group of around 40 relatives who had travelled from Palakkad. She had gone missing at around 5.30pm on 7 April while at the falls with her family. The family searched for her until about 8 pm before informing the authorities. The police and Forest Department personnel launched a search operation in the area. Thermal drones were deployed to locate her. Disaster management teams also joined the operation. —*PTI*

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Suspect arrested in 2-wheeler theft case

DHARWAD, 10 APRIL

Dharwad City police arrested Shivanand on Friday in connection with two-wheeler thefts across Dharwad and other areas, seizing seven bikes worth Rs 2,35,000. Police inspector Gurunath Chavan and Crime Branch staff made the arrest on Wednesday, recovering two stolen bikes within Dharwad City, one from Dharwad Suburban police limits, and four more from different locations. Further case details are awaited. Earlier, in March, Mandya Police arrested five suspects involved in bike thefts from Mandya and Mysore districts, including Chandrashekhar, who stole at least 15 bikes, and Rihan Pasha, Syed Ayan, and a minor, who stole around 12 bikes. The operation seized 27 bikes worth Rs 14 lakh and a gold chain valued at Rs 3 lakh. *—PTI*

Thief held for stealing women's innerwear

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 10 APRIL

Chamarajanagar Town Police have arrested a thief allegedly involved in lifting women's underwear at Indiranagar, KHB colony and several other adjoining areas over the past few months in the town. Police cracked the case after verifying the CCTVs footage of various residences and apprehended the accused, Amruthesh, 22. According to a preliminary investigation by police, Amruthesh, would wear women sarees and lift the innerwears that were hung outside for drying after entering residential premises, scaling compound walls. Police have recovered stolen panties, bras, nighties, and other women's clothing from the accused. Chamarajanagar Additional Superintendent of Police Shashidar MN told Salar that police registered a case and are investigating this case in all angles including weird behaviour of the accused, his body changes, and subjected him to various tests. *-SALAR NEWS*

Centre must rescue auto drivers, says Muniyappa

Says crisis caused by pvt bunks, solution must come from Centre

BENGALURU, 10 APRIL

Karnataka Minister KH Muniyappa, on Friday, urged the Central government to address the auto gas supply issue at the earliest, accusing it of failing to come to the rescue of auto drivers when private LPG bunks have hiked their prices or closed operations.

He met senior officials and representatives from state-run oil and gas companies regarding the auto gas supply issue, following the crisis in West Asia.

The Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs told reporters that there was an improvement in the supply of commercial cylinders, but not for auto gas, despite representations from the Chief Secretary and Chief Minister.

"Out of around 5 lakh autos in the State, 3 lakh depend on auto gas. Of these, 1.6 lakh are in Bengaluru, and they are facing difficulties," he said, adding that Karnataka has the highest number of autos running on gas.

An auto LPG bunk on Magadi Road near Kamakshipalya was closed due to the scarcity of auto LPG in Bengaluru on Friday *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

Pointing out that 280 MT of auto gas is required per day, of which 60 MT is supplied by government companies like IndianOil, BPC, and HPC, and the remaining 220 MT by the private sector, Muniyappa said private companies have failed to ensure supply.

"As the private sector has stopped supplying, the pressure is on government-run gas stations. This has resulted in long queues and a kind of chaos," he said, adding that he would soon call a meeting with private companies.

He noted that 65 per cent of auto LPG supply comes from private companies and 35 per cent from government companies. "Some private companies have stopped supplies, citing shortages, while others have hiked prices. The Centre has to take measures to control this," he said, noting that the Centre allowed private companies.

"Ensuring supply is the only solution to this issue; there is no other option. The Centre should procure auto gas from wherever possible and ensure supply to auto drivers," he said. "We want a response from the Government of India and the Petroleum Minister on whether they can ensure supply at the earliest, and if not, what the alternative is."

He added that gas companies must provide domestic cylinders to customers on the 26th day, noting that a cylinder only lasts 25 days. *—PTI*

Muslims in Cong allege conspiracy in Davangere

BENGALURU, 10 APRIL

A rift within the Karnataka Congress surfaced on Friday, a day after the bypolls to two Assembly constituencies, after a group of Muslim leaders alleged a "conspiracy" by some senior party leaders to defeat the party's official candidate in Davanagere South.

However, they asserted that despite efforts by some within to project that Congress "betrayed" Muslims, the party candidate Samarth Mallikarjun will win in Davanagere South, the constituency where the community has a significant presence.

Addressing a joint press conference, Chief Whip in the Legislative Council **Saleem Ahmed** said, "It is a sad thing that some senior leaders of our own party have conspired to defeat the Congress. Despite this minorities have voted for the Congress. KPCC President (D K Shivakumar), the Chief Minister (Siddaramaiah) and the AICC General Secretary (Randeep Singh Surjewala) are aware of this. People have

voted for Congress, its ideology and its five guarantee schemes."

MLAs Rizwan Arshad, Yasir Ahmed Khan Pathan, MLC Bilkis Bano, and other Congress leaders were also present.

Further, noting that Samath was given a ticket after taking all minority leaders of the party into confidence, Ahmed said, "…because of some misconceptions, conspiracies have been hatched. But still, I'm confident that Congress candidate Samarth will win."

MLA Arshad said that there was a massive social media campaign against the Congress party by the BJP, SDPI and Independents, alleging "betrayal" of the minorities in the constutuency by the Congress. *—PTI*

HDK says he will become CM again as he targets Siddaramaiah

MYSURU, 10 APRIL

Union Minister **HD Kumaraswamy** said even though JD(S) lacked a clear majority in the Assembly, he had become the Chief Minister twice and expressed hope that he would hold the top position in the State again.

"It was because of the grace of God," he said after visiting Sri Chamundeshwari temple atop the Chamundi Hills in Mysuru on Friday. "I will become the CM third time, if I have the God's blessings."

His comments come amidst tension between JD(S) and BJP over leadership issues.

Kumaraswamy also questioned Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's morality. Kumaraswamy said former prime minister and JD(S)

scion HD Devegowda had consoled Siddaramaiah when the latter was crying after losing the Assembly elections in 1999 from Chamundeshwari. Siddaramaiah was part of the JD(S) at the time.

"If we placed a bucket, it would overflow from the amount of tears," Kumaraswamy claimed, adding that Siddaramaiah wanted to quit politics after the drubbing. Kumaraswamy said his father had made alternative arrangements for Siddaramaiah.

But now, Siddaramaiah betrayed the JD(S) for the AHINDA movement (SC/ST and minorities).

"If he truly considers himself a champion of the AHINDA communities, let him quit the Congress, form his own front, and win at least five to 10 seats on his own merit," Kumaraswamy dared.

The Union Minister claimed that Siddaramaiah has brought his son, MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah, into politics to loot money. But HDK's son Nikhil Kumaraswamy "was in politics due to people's wishes".

The Minister added that no one has the moral right to speak about nepotism in politics. *—Salar News*

RAINS IN CITY

A person holds up an umbrella to shield from heavy rains at Ambedkar Veedhi, Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Friday. The rains brought respite from the scorching temperatures, as the IMD had forecast a heatwave till 15 April in the City *-MOHAMMED ASAD*

Ready to revise apology, says Ranveer to HC

MUMBAI, 10 APRIL

Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh told the Karnataka High Court on Friday that he is willing to file a revised affidavit of apology for his mimicry of Chamundi Devi's depiction in the film 'Kantara'.

This will allay any concerns that his earlier apology was not genuine, he told the Court.

The submission was made before Justice M Nagaprasanna on Singh's behalf by Senior Advocate Sajan Poovayya.

Poovayya told the Court on Friday that the actor has filed an affidavit regretting his comments, and clarifying that he was unaware that he was hurting the sentiments of Chamundi Devi's devotees when he made the remarks.

The complainant, Prashanth Methal, however, said that the affidavit did not reflect genuine remorse.

"Rishab Shetty (actor-director of 'Kantara') clearly told him (Singh) not to do it. There is no genuine remorse. Let them file a proper affidavit," Methal argued.

Poovayya, in turn, agreed to sit with Methal to work out the language of the apology affidavit.

Justice Nagaprasanna adjourned the case till 23 April. *— Agencies*

Woman held for murdering her husband over illicit affair

BELAGAVI/KOLAR, 10 APRIL

A woman and her alleged affair partner with have been arrested for murdering her husband on 5 April and staging it as a natural death.

The accused — mobile shop owner Kailash Balakrishna, 43, and Lakshmi Avinash Suppanna, 29 — confessed to the crime, police said.

The deceased, Avinash Ashok Suppanna, 40, an Ayurvedic therapist, had four head injuries and chest wounds from a cylinder assault.

Belagavi Police Commissioner Bhushan Borase said Lakshmi's statements were inconsistent. "If it had been an accidental fall, there might have been one injury — but there were four on the head," he said.

Prima facie, the motive appears to be an illicit relationship, with the husband seen as an obstacle.

1990 MURDER CASE SOLVED

Nangali police have solved a 36-year-old murder case, arresting Seenappa, 65, who had been absconding since January 1990. Seenappa is accused of killing Narayanappa of Halekuppa village over an alleged affair between the deceased and his wife. The case was reopened now. *—Salar News/Agencies*

BEML UNVEILS 1ST INDIGENOUS ELECTRIC DUMP TRUCK

MYSURU, 10 APRIL

BEML Limited has unveiled India's first indigenous 35-ton electric dump truck at its Mysuru complex, marking a major step toward sustainable mining solutions.

The vehicle was flagged off by Shantanu Roy, Chairman and Managing Director, in the presence of Sanjay Som, senior officials and partners. Designed for high productivity with zero tailpipe emissions, the dump truck aligns with India's ESG goals and carbon reduction commitments.

Powered by a Permanent Magnet Synchronous Motor, the truck offers 85–90% energy efficiency and is built for heavy-duty mining conditions. It has a payload capacity of 35 tons and a gross vehicle weight of about 60 tons. A regenerative braking system enhances energy recovery, especially on slopes.

The vehicle features a 300 kWh lithium-ion battery supported by an advanced liquid-cooled thermal management system for safety and durability. It also promises up to 70% energy savings and significantly lower operating costs, with a payback period of one to two years.

- The vehicle was flagged off by Shantanu Roy, chairman and Managing Director, in the presence of Sanjay Som and senior officials.

With fast-charging capability and robust safety features, BEML aims to lead India's transition to clean, high-performance mining equipment. *—Salar News*

Sign language experts help cops to solve murder

MYSURU, 10 APRIL

A team of sign language experts from All India Institute of Speech and Hearing (AIISH) turned into investigators in helping Nanjangud Rural Police crack a chilling murder case involving several specially-abled people, including the deceased.

The case related to the murder of a 32-year-old hearing impaired man named Swamy, who was allegedly murdered in a conspiracy hatched by his wife Latha and her lover Srinivas, who were also hearing impaired.

Srinivas befriended Latha at a marriage function, exchanged their mobile phone numbers and developed an illicit relationship through video calls.

On 15 February, Srinivasa allegedly executed a plan. He got Swamy intoxicated at a party near Ammattur in Tumakuru, then killed him and dumped his body at a secluded spot with the help of Gangadhar and Devaraj, who are also specially-abled.

On a missing person's complaint, police took the help of experts from AIISH and decoded their mobile data and solved the murder case. Superintendent of police Mallikarjuna Baladandi told Salar that the helped experts to translate the complainants points to reach to solve the case. Srinivas and Gangadhar were arrested. *—Salar News*

TO PURSUE DEGREE COURSE

Convict from Ballari Central Jail scores 80% in II PUC Arts

BALLARI, 10 APRIL

A convict serving a life sentence for murder at Ballari Central Jail has passed the Karnataka Second PUC Arts examination with 80.1 per cent, results for which were announced on Thursday.

Ashok Kumar, 27, a native of Bengaluru, scored 481 out of 600 marks — securing 94 in History, 84 in Economics, 82 in Kannada, 77 in Sociology, 75 in Political Science, and 69 in English — to pass with a first class.

Ashok, who has been imprisoned at Ballari jail for nine years, appeared for the exam under police escort after registering through distance learning.

Director General of Police Alok Kumar praised the achievement on social media, saying the walls of the prison had not dampened Ashok's hopes for a better future and that his achievement was heartwarming.

Deputy Inspector General of Prisons TP Sesha told Salar News that Ashok had expressed an interest in education and was provided a separate cell and a teacher to stud. He will now be enrolled in a degree programme next. Ballari Deputy Director of Pre-University Education Laxman Halladamani congratulated Ashok and the staff of the prison. *—Salar News*

Forest Dept asks ex-speaker to return encroached land

KOLAR, 10 APRIL

The Appellate Authority and Conservator of Forests (Territorial), Bengaluru, has dismissed a writ petition filed by former Assembly speaker **KR Ramesh** Kumar and directed him to hand over encroached forest land in Hosahudya village of Srinivasapur taluk in Kolar district.

The order pertains to 60.23 guntas of forest land, including six acres in Survey No. 1 and 54 acres and 23 guntas in Survey No. 2.

In its ruling issued on Friday, the authority upheld the eviction orders passed by the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Kolar, on June 24, 2011, in compliance with directions of the Karnataka High Court in Writ Petition No. 6613/2025. The authority noted that a joint survey conducted on January 15 and 16, 2025, conclusively established encroachment of forest land by Ramesh Kumar. He has been directed to hand over the land within 30 days of receiving the order. Failure to comply will result in immediate eviction by the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Kolar division, as per the order. *—Salar News*

BJP bats for UCC in West Bengal

BJP's manifesto vows to stop infiltration & bring back 'Ram Rajya' in state

KOLKATA, 10 APRIL

Throwing down what could become the defining ideological battle of the West Bengal election, the BJP promised in its manifesto on Friday to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) within six months of coming to power, a move that may consolidate Hindu votes even as the TMC seeks to rally the drifting minority voters behind it once again.

At the release of the BJP's "Sankalp Patra" in Kolkata, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said there would be "one law for every citizen in Bengal," regardless of religion.

Shah also seized on TMC leader Akhil Giri's remark that Bengal did not need "Ram Rajya". "Ram Rajya is a concept of good governance, one that Mahatma Gandhi himself spoke about during the freedom struggle," he said.

The UCC, one common set of laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption for all citizens, has long been a core demand of the RSS-BJP combine.

By foregrounding it barely two weeks before polling begins on 23 April, the BJP appears to be betting that a polarised election suits it better than a straight contest over unemployment, prices and anti-incumbency. dThe timing is significant in a state where Muslims constitute nearly 30 per cent of the population and hold the balance in more than 110 of the 294 assembly seats.

"Tell me one thing. The Constitution is based on the principle that every citizen, regardless of religion, should be treated equally. Is having the same law for every citizen appeasement? Or is appeasement when one citizen is allowed four marriages and another only one? The UCC ends appeasement," he said. —*PTI*

BJP President Samik Bhattacharya, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari unveil BJP poll manifesto, in Kolkata —*PTI*

BJP'S 15 KEY PROMISES

- Implement the Uniform Civil Code

- Strict measures against illegal immigration; curb cattle smuggling.
- Enact law to ensure freedom of religion

Rs 3,000 monthly aid for women

- DA at central rates; implement 7th Pay Commission.
- White paper on corruption, law and order under 15 years of TMC rule.
- To build Vande Mataram Museum.
- To end 'cut money' culture, syndicate system.
- Implement central schemes; set up AIIMS, IIT, IIM.

- Support for paddy, potato, mango farmers.
- Kurmali, Rajbanshi languages to be included in Eighth Schedule of Indian Constitution.
- Develop Bengal as industrial, fish-export hub.
- Revive tea gardens; promote Darjeeling tea, modernise jute

- Jobs for 10 million; Rs 3,000 aid till employment.
- Special women's police battalion; 33% job quota for women.

A screengrab of a person resembling Humayun Kabir in a viral video —*PTI*

₹1,000 cr BJP deal' video sinks Kabir-AIMIM tie-up

KOLKATA, 10 APRIL

The fledgling alliance between Humayun Kabir's Aam Janata Unnayan Party (AJUP) and **Asaduddin Owaisi**'s AIMIM collapsed on Friday, barely a fortnight after it was formed, following the circulation of a purported video alleging links with the BJP.

The immediate trigger was a 19-minute video shared by the Trinamool Congress (TMC), which it claimed showed Kabir speaking of a secret understanding with the BJP. PTI could not independently verify the video's authenticity.

In the footage, a person resembling Kabir was allegedly heard claiming proximity to Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The individual also purportedly referred to a multi-crore arrangement, claiming he had received Rs 200 crore in advance as part of a larger Rs 1,000 crore deal to unseat Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Following the controversy, AIMIM announced it was withdrawing from the alliance and would contest the West Bengal elections independently, saying it could not be associated with statements that undermine the integrity of Muslims.

The BJP moved swiftly to distance itself, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah rejecting any links and saying Kabir and the BJP were "like the North Pole and the South Pole". He accused the TMC of manufacturing conspiracies, adding the party would rather remain in opposition than align with those advocating a Babri Masjid in Bengal.

The TMC, however, alleged Kabir's campaign was part of a covert BJP strategy to split minority votes in districts such as Murshidabad, Malda, Uttar Dinajpur and Birbhum.

Kabir denied the charges, calling the video fabricated and possibly AI-generated, and threatened legal action against Abhishek Banerjee and Firhad Hakim if allegations were not proven.

He said AJUP would contest 182 seats independently and claimed it could win nearly 100 of Bengal's 294 constituencies.

AIMIM leader Imran Solanki said the party would contest 11 seats, asserting the need for an independent political voice for Muslims. —*PTI*

To win, BJP brought outsiders to vote in Assam polls: Didi

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday claimed that the BJP brought people from outside for the Assam elections as it was not confident of victory with the votes of the north-eastern state's residents.

She alleged that no agency in the country was neutral under the BJP government at the Centre as "the saffron party has bought them all".

"A trainload of 50,000 people was brought to Assam from Uttar Pradesh," she claimed. Elections to the 126-member Assam Assembly were held in a single phase on Thursday.

"Even a snake can be trusted, but not the BJP," she added, as acrimony between the TMC and the BJP gained temperature ahead of the two-phase assembly polls in West Bengal. —*PTI*

SC to hear on freezing electoral rolls in WB

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a plea challenging the Election Commission's decision to freeze electoral rolls in West Bengal ahead of the assembly elections. The plea, along with pending ones, will be considered on 13 April. The poll panel froze and finalised the electoral rolls on 9 April, with elections scheduled for 23 and 29 April and votes counted on 4 May. The freeze prevents new entries or deletions from the voters list for this poll. A bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant said, "We will consider the petition on 13 April," after a lawyer urged urgent hearing. Senior advocate DS Naidu highlighted that the freeze was effective from 9 April, and the right to vote remains protected. —*PTI*

Bihar Assembly receives hoax bomb threat

PATNA, 10 APRIL

The Bihar Legislative Assembly on Friday received a bomb threat through email, police said. Speaking to PTI, Sachiwalay-1 Sub-divisional Police Officer Anu Kumari said, "We received information that an email containing bomb threat was received by Bihar Legislative Assembly officials. Police are thoroughly inspecting the premises." Bomb and dog squad teams were deployed, and an intensive search is underway, she said. The assembly had got a similar threat on 13 March, which, however, turned out to be hoax. —*PTI*

Will let my work talk: Chadha over AAP rift

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

AAP MP Raghav Chadha, currently at odds with his party, posted a video on Instagram titled "Voice Raised Price Paid" showing clips of him raising issues in Parliament. He stated, "With due respect, to those questioning my performance, I will let my work do the talking." The AAP removed Chadha as its deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha on 2 April, accusing him of avoiding criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Centre, and engaging in "soft PR." Chadha dismissed these claims. Since his removal, he has shared several social media posts affirming he will not accept his demotion quietly. —*PTI*

Pawan Khera gets bail in Himanta's wife case

HYDERABAD, 10 APRIL

In some relief to senior Congress leader **Pawan Khera**, the Telangana High Court on Friday granted temporary anticipatory bail for one week to the party spokesperson in a case filed by the Assam police over his alleged remarks against Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife.

During the hearing of a petition filed by Khera, Justice Sujana Kalasikam said, "The petitioner is granted time for one week to file an application before the concerned court. Granting relief to the petitioner for one week with the conditions."

The Congress leader on April 5 had alleged that the Assam CM's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, has multiple passports and foreign property, which were not declared in the chief minister's election affidavit for the April 9 Assembly polls in that state.

Khera, who filed the petition in the High Court on 7 April, showed his residential address in Hyderabad. He requested the court to release him on bail in the event of his arrest.

Congress MP and senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, who argued virtually for Khera on Thursday, alleged political vendetta in the case by the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led government. —*PTI*

Over 4,600 candidates in fray for TN Assembly polls

CHENNAI, 10 APRIL

As many as 4,610 candidates are in fray in the high-stakes battle for 234 Assembly constituencies in the 23 April Assembly polls in Tamil Nadu following scrutiny.

A total of 529 candidates withdrew from the race, the election commission said on Friday. A total of 7,599 candidates, including independents, filed their nomination papers, and 2,460 were rejected.

In the Kolathur constituency in Chennai, where Chief Minister and DMK president MK Stalin is contesting, the EC has accepted the nominations of 41 candidates, and in Chepuak-Thiruvallikeni constituency, from where Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin is contesting for the second consecutive term, 26 candidates are in the fray.

In the Edappadi constituency from where AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami is contesting, 15 persons are in the fray.

The nominations of 47 candidates have been accepted in the Perambur seat in Chennai, and 27 candidates are in the fray in Tiruchirappalli East. Actor-politician Vijay is contesting in both constituencies in his electoral debut. The deadline for withdrawal of nominations ended on 9 April.

Meanhile, the DMK on Friday lashed out at AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami for making "highly derogatory" and "third-rate" remarks against the party's Deputy General Secretary Kanimozhi Karunanidhi. —*PTI*

A day after polls, Kerala sees violence

KANNUR, 10 APRIL

A house belonging to a supporter of a CPI(M) rebel candidate was attacked and a car parked on the premises was set on fire at Payyannur here, police said on Friday.

Payyannur police have registered a case and launched an investigation into the incident. The house belonged to T Purushothaman, a native of Mavicheri in Payyannur. According to the police, the complainant has alleged that CPI(M) workers were involved in the incident.

Purushothaman is a staunch supporter of V Kunhikrishnan, who defected from the CPI(M), raising corruption allegations against party leaders, and contested as an Independent candidate with UDF support in the Payyannur constituency. As per the FIR, the incident occurred around 12.30am when unidentified persons trespassed into the house compound, set fire to the car parked there, and smashed window panes by pelting stones.

A parked car that was set on fire during a CPI(M) rebel candidate attack, in Kannur, on Friday —*SCREENGRAB*

Additionally, multiple incidents of violence were reported in various parts of the Taliparamba constituency here, with a CPI(M) worker allegedly stabbed and Congress-led UDF workers attacked after the Assembly election polling concluded on Thursday night, police said. In Taliparamba, CPI(M) rebel leader TK Govindan is contesting as an Independent candidate with UDF support.

According to officials at Mayyil police station, a CPI(M) worker identified as Prakashan P, 50, a native of Kuttichira in Kayaralam, was allegedly stabbed outside the Mulakkody UP School polling station at around 7pm.

Police have registered a case of attempt to murder against a UDF activist identified as Krishnan. —*PTI*

> **2026 Assembly election would be the last contest between three political fronts (NDA, UDF & LDF) in Kerala.**
>
> -Rajeev Chandrasekhar, BJP Kerala President

> **The SIR of the electoral roll had led to a loss of around 10,000 votes for me in the Puthuppally Assembly constituency in Kerala.**
>
> -Chandy Oommen, Congress leader

END OF 2-DECADE RULE AS CM

Nitish Kumar takes oath as Rajya Sabha member

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday took oath as a member of Rajya Sabha, marking the end of his two-decade rule in the eastern state and paving the way for a new chief minister.

The oath was administered by Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan in his chamber at a brief ceremony.

The Chairman later welcomed him as a member of the Upper House and also on his return in Parliament.

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary was also present at the oath-taking.

"Vice President of India and Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Shri CP Radhakrishnan, administered the oath to Shri Nitish Kumar as an elected Member of Rajya Sabha, from Bihar, at Parliament House today," the Vice President's office said on X, while sharing pictures of the oath-taking.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar takes oath as a Rajya Sabha member, in New Delhi, on Friday —*PTI*

Kumar will soon resign as chief minister and the NDA is likely to elect a new chief minister of Bihar on 14 April.

Additionally, Rajya Sabha's outgoing deputy chairman Harivansh on Friday took oath as a member of the Upper House after President Droupadi Murmu nominated him following a vacancy created by the retirement of former chief justice of India Ranjan Gogoi.

Harivansh, 69, has completed his two terms as a member of Rajya Sabha representing Bihar. —*PTI*

Rumours rife about Sena (UBT) leaders joining Shinde unit

MUMBAI, 10 APRIL

Senior Opposition leaders in Maharashtra on Friday claimed there was a "sense of discomfort" within the Shiv Sena despite being in power, but dismissed reports that a section of Opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) will join the Eknath Shinde-led party.

They denied the possibility of any major political upheaval in the state in the near future.

There has been a buzz that the Shiv Sena has secretly launched 'Operation Tiger' in a bid to induce defections among leaders of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena (UBT). However, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who heads the ruling Sena, on Friday dubbed the reports as "baseless."

NCP (SP) leader and former home minister Anil Deshmukh questioned the existence of the 'Operation Tiger.' He claimed that the 10 MPs belonging to Uddhav Thackeray's party were united. —*PTI*

In CWC meet, Congress denounces delimitations

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The Congress Working Committee met here on Friday to deliberate on the government's move to amend the women's reservation law, the proposed delimitation exercise and West Asia conflict.

The meeting, chaired by Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge and several senior leaders of the party.

The meeting, held at the Congress' Indira Bhawan headquarters, comes days ahead of the Parliament session, during which the government will bring bills to implement the Women's Reservation Act to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816, with 273 reserved for women.

The Congress has accused the government of using the proposal to amend the women's quota law to "grab political mileage" in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu polls.

Kharge said the proposed move would amount to a violation of the model code of conduct. He said that his party would formulate a collective strategy with others in the Opposition to move forward "unitedly" on this issue.

Congress said that the government's push for a rushed delimitation exercise would have "dangerous consequence." —*PTI*

Probe ends as Justice Varma quits

He will get pension and other benefits that impeachment would have denied him

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The resignation of Justice Yashwant Varma has brought to a close the inquiry initiated under the Judges (Inquiry) Act into the discovery of burnt currency at his Delhi residence in March 2025, with removal proceedings now rendered infructuous.

Legal experts said that by stepping down, he remains eligible for pension and other benefits, privileges that would have been denied in case of impeachment.

Justice Varma is learnt to have submitted his resignation to President Droupadi Murmu, as a panel appointed by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla is scheduled to begin hearings on Friday into the allegations against him.

The Supreme Court had earlier dismissed Justice Varma's plea challenging the legality of the committee constituted by the Speaker *PHOTO: PTI*

- Varma had been facing a probe under Section 3 of the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, which deals with "misbehaviour or incapacity" by a judge after the recovery of burnt currency notes from his residence

The judge had been facing an inquiry under Section 3 of the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, which deals with investigation into "misbehaviour or incapacity" by a judge. The proceedings followed the reported recovery of burnt currency from his official residence in Delhi last year.

Earlier, the Supreme Court had dismissed Justice Varma's plea challenging the legality of the committee constituted by the Speaker, holding that statutory provisions could not be used to stall parliamentary proceedings. An in-house inquiry was also initiated by the judiciary. In an unprecedented move, the Supreme Court uploaded its internal report, along with photographs and videos, on 22 March 2025.

The then CJI, Sanjiv Khanna, constituted a three-member panel comprising Justice Aravind Kumar, Madras High Court Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and senior advocate BV Acharya.

Despite reported advice from the then Chief Justice of India to resign, he initially refused, prompting a recommendation for impeachment.

He was later repatriated from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad HC. With his resignation taking immediate effect, officials said he is now a private citizen, and criminal proceedings may be initiated if the government deems appropriate.

Justice Varma, enrolled in 1992, was appointed a judge of the Allahabad HC in 2014 and elevated to the Delhi HC in 2021. *– PTI*

Juvenile held for sexually assaulting minor Hyd girl

HYDERABAD, 10 APRIL

A 13-year-old girl was "sexually assaulted" by a minor boy, police said on Friday. According to the police release, the boy, who had befriended the girl on social media, sexually assaulted her soon after. Based on the minor girl's statement, a case was registered at the Kacheguda police station. During the course of the investigation, the minor was apprehended and produced before the Juvenile Justice Board. After hearing the arguments of both sides and examining the facts including the medical report, the Juvenile Justice Board sent the juvenile to an observation home, the release added. *–PTI*

–INSTAGRAM

Influencer Kanchan Kumari's 'killer' deported to India

CHANDIGARH, 10 APRIL

Amritpal Singh Mehron, the primary suspect in social media influencer Kanchan Kumari's murder, was deported from West Asia and arrested in India, police said on Friday. The 30-year-old, a resident of Moga and self-styled Sikh leader, fled to the UAE after Kumari's killing in June 2025. Police had issued a lookout circular. Kumari was found dead in an abandoned car in Bathinda. Three others had been arrested earlier; two claimed she was killed for uploading "immoral and vulgar content." Punjab Police, supported by central agencies, traced Mehron to the Middle East and deported him, arresting him at Delhi's IGI Airport. *–PTI*

–X/ UPPOLICE

BJP leader among 6 held in UP IPL betting racket

MATHURA, 10 APRIL

Police busted an illegal IPL betting operation in Mathura, arresting six individuals, including a local BJP leader, police said. The suspect, Bankebihari, was found running the racket from a shuttered house in Shivdham Colony. Police recovered Rs 1.6 lakh in cash, 11 mobile phones, betting records, and a laptop. During the raid, police caught Bankebihari and five others actively involved. The others include Adil, Rizwan, Kishore, Mukesh, and Bobby. Most are residents of Mathura, with Bobby from Firozabad. Police are investigating the extent of the gambling network under the Public Gambling Act. *–PTI*

–SCREENGRAB

Toddler taken out from borewell, found dead

UJJAIN, 10 APRIL

A two-and-a-half-year-old boy, who fell into a borewell in a village in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain district, was pulled out on Friday after nearly 23 hours of rescue operation and taken to hospital where he was declared dead, officials said. The toddler, Bhagirath, slipped into the borewell in Jhalariya village under Badnagar tehsil, about 75 km from the district headquarters, at around 7.30pm on Thursday, triggering a rescue operation involving multiple teams, including one from the NDRF. Ujjain Collector Roshan Kumar said the child was rushed to hospital immediately. However, the child was found dead during examination. *–PTI*

SC blasts cop over 'insensitive' rape probe

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The Supreme Court intervened in the rape-murder case of a four-year-old girl in Ghaziabad on Friday and summoned the police commissioner and the investigating officer to appear on 13 April with case records.

CJI Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi took note of the submissions of senior lawyer N Hariharan, appearing for the victim's father, a labourer, and expressed its displeasure over the manner in which the police had conducted the investigation.

The CJI lambasted the police and two private hospitals, which refused to treat the girl before she died after an alleged rape, for their "complete indifference" and "insensitive approach".

On 16 March, the victim was allegedly lured away by a neighbour who offered her chocolates and when the child did not return, a search by the father found her unconscious and covered in blood. She later died at a government hospital in Ghaziabad. *— PTI*

Mattoo case: Parole extension denial upheld

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The Supreme Court refused to hear a plea challenging the denial of parole extension to convict Santosh Kumar Singh in the 1996 Priyadarshini Mattoo murder case.

Justices BV Nagarathna and Prashant Kumar Mishra said that the matter related to remission is already pending before the Delhi High Court and coming up for hearing on 18 May.

The bench granted liberty to Singh to seek advancement of his hearing on the plea before the high court.

"If such a request is made, the HC shall consider it, as the incident occurred on 23 January 1996, and as the petitioner had been in jail for 31 years," the bench said. *— PTI*

- Justices BV Nagarathna and Prashant Kumar Mishra said the remission plea is pending before the High Court

SC bins plea to stop caste census

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The Supreme Court dismissed a plea on Friday seeking a direction to the Centre to stop the caste census, and slammed the petitioner for the language used in the PIL.

"You have written indecent language in your petition. Who has written your petition?," an angry Chief Justice Surya Kant told the petitioner, who appeared in person.

The bench dismissed the plea, which also sought a direction to the Centre to formulate policies to provide economic incentives to families with only a single child.

On 2 February, the court had refused to entertain another PIL questioning the procedure adopted to record, classify and verify the caste data of citizens in the 2027 general Census.

The 2027 Census, officially the 16th national census, will be the first to include comprehensive caste enumeration after 1931 and the country's first fully digital census.

Meanwhile, around 5.72 lakh households have availed the self-enumeration facility so far during the first phase of the Census 2027, the Registrar General of India (RGI) said on Friday.This reflects the growing participation in the digital initiative of the Census, it said.

"By choosing to provide their details online, these families have embraced a faster and convenient way to contribute to nation-building," the RGI said on X.

The self-enumeration facility is available to citizens in states and Union territories, which will start physical Houselisting and Housing Census (HLO) from 16 April. *— PTI*

Approach govt, not courts, SC tells man who filed 25 PILs

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Friday told an advocate, who filed 25 PILs on a range of issues, that he should approach the authorities instead of rushing to court.

Advocate Sachin Gupta, who was appearing as petitioner-in-person, told a bench headed by CJI Surya Kant that he wanted to withdraw the PILs.

"You should approach the authorities instead of rushing to court," the CJI, who was heading the bench, told Gupta. The bench said at an appropriate stage, the court would consider his petitions. — PTI

CHRISTIAN PRIEST GETS RELIEF

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The SC stayed criminal proceedings and summons against a Christian priest, who claimed that Christianity was the only true religion.

Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta issued a notice to the UP government on a plea by Rev. Father Vineet Vincent Pereira challenging the 18 March order of the Allahabad High Court.

Senior advocate Siddharth Dave, appearing for the priest, said the police invoked section 295A of the IPC, which deals with deliberate acts intended to outrage religious feelings. Dave said criminal proceedings and summons issued against him should be stayed. The bench agreed to the request.

On 18 March, the Allahabad High Court, while dismissing the plea of Father Pereira, observed that claiming that a particular religion is the "only true religion" is "wrongr in a democracy like India.

The FIR filed by Uttar Pradesh police says that the applicant allegedly held prayer meetings where he repeatedly stated that Christianity was the only true religion.

The investigating officer found no evidence of illegal religious conversion but proceeded with filing a chargesheet for criticising other religions. *— PTI*

Film director Ranjith gets bail in sexual harassment case

KOCHI, 10 APRIL

A court here on Friday granted bail to film director Ranjith, who was arrested in a sexual harassment case.

Judicial First Class Magistrate L Usha granted bail imposing stringent conditions.

The court directed Ranjith to surrender his passport, not to leave Ernakulam district, and not to enter the crime scene in Fort Kochi where the film shooting was held.

He was ordered to execute a bond of Rs 1 lakh and furnish two solvent sureties of the like amount.

- The court directed Ranjith to surrender his passport, not to leave Ernakulam district, and not to enter the alleged crime scene in Fort Kochi where the film shooting was held

The court also directed Ranjith to appear before the investigating officer every Monday for the next three months or until the charge sheet in the case is filed.

Ranjith, who is lodged at Ernakulam Sub Jail, will be released soon.

He was arrested from Thodupuzha on 31 March after an actress approached the police alleging that she was sexually harassed by the director inside a caravan during a film shoot in Fort Kochi.

Earlier, the police had interrogated Ranjith in custody.

When the bail plea was considered, the prosecution opposed it, claiming that he had not cooperated with the investigation.

However, the defence counsel submitted that Ranjith had neither objected to his arrest nor custodial interrogation earlier.

The defence also cited his medical condition while seeking bail. *— PTI*

Misri meets US officials, Rubio to visit India soon

WASHINGTON, 10 APRIL

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is scheduled to visit New Delhi next month, following a meeting with India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri at the White House on Thursday.

The leaders discussed trade, critical minerals, defence, and the Quad, with the US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, posting on X that Rubio looks forward to the visit.

Gor stated that the meeting focused on deepening bilateral ties, especially in these sectors. Misri, on a three-day US visit, met US Deputy Secretary Christopher Landau and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Allison Hooker.

Landau reaffirmed the close partnership between the two nations, sharing updates on regional priorities, including the Persian Gulf.

Hooker highlighted efforts to enhance cooperation on security, defence, and economics, emphasising practical steps to make both countries safer through initiatives like the Quad. The embassy also said that Misri and Hooker shared assessments on recent developments in West Asia.

In Washington, Misri also met FBI Director Kash Patel to discuss counter-terrorism, organised crime, and steps to control the narcotics trade.

Meanwhile, US Vice President JD Vance is leading a delegation to Islamabad for talks with Iranian leaders, as a two-week Pakistan-brokered ceasefire begins. *—PTI*

Unseasonal rains damage 2.49L ha of rabi crops

BHOPAL, 10 APRIL

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Friday that unseasonal rains and hailstorms have damaged rabi crops on 2.49 lakh hectares, with the wheat crop the most affected.

Speaking to reporters ahead of the "Unnat Krishi Mela" launch in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh, Chouhan said three departments are conducting the survey, and assessments are still underway.

The reported damage, till 8 April, shows that wheat crop was the most affected, followed by mango and litchi.

On 5 April, Chouhan had directed officials to review losses and coordinate with state governments. He has also consulted the agriculture ministers of impacted regions.

IMD forecasts more rain from 9-15 April due to western disturbances over Jammu & Kashmir, cyclonic circulations over Uttar Pradesh, Bangladesh, Assam and Odisha, and associated troughs.

With farmers gearing up for kharif sowing from June, Chouhan said the government is ensuring fertiliser supply to shield against global price swings due to West Asia tensions.

The subsidy for phosphatic and potassium fertilisers has been hiked to Rs 41,534 crore for Kharif 2026. Efforts are being made to diversify import sources. *— PTI*

ISRO completes air drop test for Gaganyaan

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The ISRO has successfully conducted the second integrated air drop test (IADT-02) for its Gaganyaan mission at Sriharikota.

The system is essential to ensure safe recovery of the crew module, the capsule in which astronauts sit during a human flight, during re-entry and landing.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh congratulated the Indian Space Research Organisation for successfully conducting the test.

The IADT-02 follows the successful completion of the first IADT, which took place on 24 August 2025 at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. Air drop tests recreate the last leg of a spacecraft's return to the Earth. An aircraft or helicopter drops the spacecraft from a height to test various systems under different scenarios.

These are the deployment of the parachute system in case the mission is aborted mid-flight, system performance when one parachute fails to open, and the spacecraft's orientation and safety during splashdown, etc.

In the first IADT, a 4.8-tonne dummy crew module was dropped from a height of three km by a Chinook helicopter.

After the module's release, a parachute system, comprising 10 parachutes, was deployed, helping the capsule to decelerate and safely splash down in the sea. *— PTI*

RELIGIOUS RITUAL

11K litres of milk poured into Narmada, greens see red

SEHORE, 10 APRIL

Nearly 11,000 litres of milk were poured into the Narmada river in Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district during a religious ritual, prompting environmentalists to flag its impact on the ecosystem.

This was done on the culmination of a 21-day religious event held at the Satdev village in the Bherunda area, located about 90 km from district headquarters on Wednesday.

The milk was offered to the river as part of rituals and prayers for the purity of its waters, the well-being of pilgrims and prosperity, organisers said on Thursday.

They said the milk was brought in tankers to the river bank and poured into the flowing water amid the chanting of mantras in the presence of devotees. However, environmentalists raised concerns over the practice, warning of its ecological impact.

"Large quantities of organic matter can deplete dissolved oxygen in water, adversely affecting the river ecosystem. That impact local communities dependent on the river for drinking water and threaten aquatic life as well as domestic animals," said environmentalist and wildlife activist Ajay Dube.

Religious offerings should be symbolic and logical, he asserted. *— PTI*

Final SIR rolls unsettles BJP's hold over WB's Matuas in WB

For years, the BJP's equation with Bengal's Matua refugees was built on a single promise -- back the party, and the long uncertainty over their citizenship will be resolved.

But the final electoral rolls following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) have turned that promise into the saffron party's biggest vulnerability.

Deletion of lakhs of names from the Matua community in Nadia and North 24 Parganas districts has set off the first signs of political drift in the refugee Hindu belt that has been at the heart of the BJP's expansion in Bengal since 2019.

What has shaken the party is not just the scale of the deletions, but the places which were most affected.

It was Bongaon, Bagdah, Gaighata, Swarupnagar, Ranaghat and Krishnanagar where the BJP had built an apparently durable social base around the promise of nationality under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The political conversation in these areas has changed sharply. Till a few months ago, the BJP was asking Matua voters to back it in the hope that the CAA would finally settle decades of uncertainty over identity and belonging.

Now, many of the same voters are again asking why, after years of supporting the BJP on the promise of citizenship, they were being "forced to prove that they belong here". "After voting on the promise of citizenship for years, I have lost my voting rights. If my name is not on the voter list, what is the guarantee that tomorrow I will not be told I do not belong here?" posed Ashok Mondal of Gaighata. The first signs of voter base erosion are already visible. In Boyra village of Bagdah, nearly 50 Matua families moved to the TMC from the BJP after finding their names missing from the rolls. "We voted for the BJP because they said they would end all this. Instead, we have lost our voting rights too," said one villager who recently joined the TMC. The Matua vote is spread across nearly 55 assembly constituencies in Nadia, North 24 Parganas and parts of north Bengal. The community has often determined electoral outcomes in south Bengal. BJP insiders privately admit that Matua and refugee-dominated seats contributed more than half of their tally of 77 seats in the 2021 polls. That is why the final electoral rolls have left the BJP at unease.

"If the Matua vote is disrupted, we will suffer because this is our core social base. Our challenge now is to hold on to the voters who remain on the rolls and convince the others that their names will be restored," a BJP leader from Bongaon told PTI.

North 24 Parganas, which has the largest concentration of the Matua community, lost more than 12.3 lakh names in the voter list revision.

People wait to submit petitions before the Special Tribunal after their names were deleted from SIR final voter list in West Bengal -PTI

BALLOT BUZZ

- For years, the BJP's equation with Bengal's Matua refugees was built on a single promise -- back the party, and the long uncertainty over their citizenship will be resolved. But the final electoral rolls following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) have turned that promise into the saffron party's biggest vulnerability. Deletion of lakhs of names from the Matua community in Nadia and North 24 Parganas districts has set off the first signs of political drift in the refugee Hindu belt that has been at the heart of the BJP's expansion in Bengal since 2019.

The heaviest blow came in the Bongaon subdivision.

Total deletions stand around 55,000 in Bagda, while Bongaon North and Bongaon South together saw nearly 75,000 names disappear from the rolls. Around 39,000 names were deleted in Gaighata, and around 18,000 in Swarupnagar.

In Nadia, where Matua influence stretches across Ranaghat, Krishnaganj and parts of Chakdaha, nearly 78 per cent of those placed under adjudication were struck off -- the highest rate in the state.

Researchers studying SIR data say the highest rates of "unmapped" voters were found in constituencies reserved for the Scheduled Caste, such as Gaighata and Bagdah, affecting mostly Matuas and Namasudras.

That has left the BJP in an awkward position in the very areas where it had argued that Hindu refugees need not worry about documents since the CAA would protect them.

Before the election, the party opened CAA helpdesks in parts of Bengal and urged refugee Hindus to apply first and verify later. The message was that even those without formal documents would eventually receive citizenship.

But after the final poll rolls were published, many of those families are again standing in queues with old voter slips, Aadhaar cards, ration cards and school certificates, trying to establish their identity.

Bongaon MP and Union minister Shantanu Thakur insisted there was no reason for people to panic.

"No Hindu refugee will have to go anywhere. Nobody will be pushed to Bangladesh. We are helping everyone file appeals. Everybody will get citizenship and will have their names restored to the voter rolls," he said.

The BJP has deployed workers in the Matua-dominated areas to help people file Form 6 applications and online appeals. Yet the reassurance has not fully worked.

"There is anger, confusion and helplessness. People thought the citizenship question had been settled. Instead, they are once again standing in lines with papers in their hands," said Mahitosh Baidya of the All India Matua Mahasangha. He said citizenship certificates issued so far in the Matua areas account for less than one per cent of an estimated one crore applicants. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has sought to turn that anger into a political counterattack, arguing that even Hindu refugees who voted for the BJP are no longer safe from name deletion.

Rajya Sabha MP Mamata Bala Thakur, who heads the TMC-backed faction of the Matua Mahasangha, said, "Matuas voted for the BJP, believing it would give them citizenship. Now, even their voting rights are being snatched away. People are terrified that after their names vanish from the rolls, tomorrow they may be branded foreigners." For years, the BJP told Bengal's refugee Hindus that citizenship was only a vote away. After the final SIR rolls, many in the Matua heartland are asking, if their names on the list are no longer secure, what exactly did that vote guarantee? —PTI

SALAR

Peace in Gaza still out of reach even after ceasefire

Friday marked six months since the Gaza ceasefire came into effect — a milestone overshadowed by confusion surrounding the fragile truce in the Iran war. While large-scale fighting in Gaza has largely subsided, the situation on the ground suggests that a ceasefire alone is far from a resolution.

The Palestinian territory, home to around two million people, has seen the most intense clashes between Israeli forces and Hamas-led militants come to a halt. Yet the broader work of peace remains incomplete. Key challenges include disarming Hamas, ending its two-decade rule, deploying an international stabilisation force and beginning large-scale reconstruction.

For now, Gaza's residents remain in limbo. Aid flows are limited, entering primarily through a single Israeli-controlled border crossing. Humanitarian conditions remain dire, offering a sobering preview of what may follow in the Iran conflict. The United States' current approach, halting bombardment while leaving long-term solutions unresolved, raises questions about the durability of such ceasefires.

Whether a similar framework can be applied to Iran remains uncertain. The situation there is more complex, involving multiple actors and heightened global economic sensitivities.

FOCUS ON DETAILS PROVES CRITICAL

Attention to the fine print of ceasefire agreements has already proven crucial. In the Iran conflict, a two-week truce has led to confusion over Lebanon. Israel maintains the ceasefire does not extend there and continues strikes against Hezbollah, while Iran insists otherwise and has threatened escalation. Adding to the uncertainty, Israel recently authorised direct negotiations with Lebanon despite the absence of formal diplomatic ties.

The US-led "Board of Peace", launched with $7 billion in pledges and ambitious goals to address Gaza and other global conflicts, has stalled. Just nine days after its inaugural meeting, the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran. The board has not reconvened since and is still awaiting Hamas' response to proposals, particularly on disarmament, widely seen as the most difficult step.

A US official, speaking anonymously, said no firm deadline had been set for Hamas' response, though patience "is not unlimited". The absence of a timeline risks weakening pressure, while diplomatic efforts are increasingly stretched across multiple crises.

At the United Nations, the board's director warned that the world must not lose focus on Gaza despite the emergence of new conflicts. He framed the choice starkly: a return to war or the chance for a new beginning, with no middle ground.

LIFE 'AS IF THERE'S NO CEASEFIRE'

For many Palestinians, however, there appears to be a third reality — neglect.

Six months on, daily life in Gaza has seen little improvement beyond the relative quieting of large-scale bombardment. Vast tent camps house much of the population, while others shelter in damaged buildings.

Humanitarian workers report minimal progress in delivering essential supplies. A recent assessment by international aid groups found that conditions have worsened since the Iran conflict began. In early March, the number of aid trucks entering Gaza dropped sharply, while the cost of basic goods surged. Medical evacuations have largely stalled.

Residents describe an ongoing crisis. Displaced families speak of worsening pollution, disease and a lack of meaningful change. Despite the ceasefire, sporadic violence continues. Israeli forces have conducted airstrikes and opened fire near military zones, while militants have carried out attacks on troops.

According to Gaza's Health Ministry, hundreds have been killed since the ceasefire began, adding to an already staggering death toll from the broader conflict that erupted in October 2023. While the ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants, its figures are generally regarded as credible by international observers.

DIPLOMATIC ATTENTION WANES

The shift in global focus to the Iran conflict has diluted international pressure on Gaza. Once central to global outrage and diplomacy, the territory now risks being sidelined. Humanitarian groups note that progress on aid delivery has typically required sustained, high-level diplomatic intervention, particularly from the United States. Such pressure, they argue, has been inconsistent and insufficient.

The distraction extends beyond Washington. Regional mediators such as Egypt and Qatar are increasingly preoccupied with the implications of the Iran conflict, including its economic fallout. Meanwhile, escalating tensions in Lebanon further complicate efforts to stabilise Gaza. Countries may be less willing to contribute troops to any future peacekeeping force. Indonesia, one of the few nations to commit personnel, has already suffered casualties among its peacekeepers in southern Lebanon. Six months after the ceasefire, Gaza illustrates a difficult truth: stopping the fighting is only the first step. Without sustained political will, clear timelines and coordinated international effort, ceasefires risk becoming pauses in conflict rather than pathways to peace. —PTI

Six months on, daily life in Gaza has seen little improvement beyond the relative quieting of large-scale bombardment —PTI

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

What will it take to get ships going through Hormuz again?

Wednesday's ceasefire announcement by US President Donald Trump, linked to Iran reopening the Strait of Hormuz, sparked immediate optimism that commercial shipping would resume. It did not.

By the following morning, traffic through the strategic waterway remained minimal. Only a handful of vessels, many with links to Iran, made the transit, while the majority of ships waiting in the Gulf stayed put. Shortly afterwards, Iran signalled it would effectively close the strait in response to Israel's attacks on Lebanon.

Yet the reality is more complex. The Strait of Hormuz has never been physically closed. Framing the situation as "open" or "closed" misses the point entirely. Ships are not being blocked, they are being deterred.

In recent weeks, Iran has demonstrated both the capability and the intent to target commercial shipping. A combination of direct attacks and credible threats has driven daily vessel transits down from around 130 to just a handful. Until that risk changes, ships are unlikely to return in meaningful numbers.

The critical question, then, is what it will take to restore confidence.

Uncertainty fuels hesitation

Rather than clarifying the situation, ceasefire declarations have added to the uncertainty. Washington has insisted the strait remains open, while Tehran's messaging has been more ambiguous. Iranian officials have referenced requirements for vessels to notify authorities before transiting, with some interpreting this as a precursor to exerting control over the waterway, potentially through a toll system.

This ambiguity matters. Shipping is a commercial activity governed by risk calculations, not political assurances. Operators, insurers and crews will not act on statements alone, particularly when recent developments suggest those statements may not hold.

The result is paralysis. Even without a formal blockade, the perception of danger has proven sufficient to halt traffic.

A TWO-STAGE PATH TO RECOVERY

Restoring shipping through the strait will likely require a two-stage approach: reducing the threat and rebuilding confidence.

The first stage involves materially degrading Iran's ability and willingness to target vessels. This could be achieved through military action, diplomacy or a combination of both. A ceasefire alone is insufficient if it does not alter the underlying risk environment.

Restoring shipping through the strait will likely require a two-stage approach: reducing the threat and rebuilding confidence -PTI

The second stage, reassurance, may prove even more critical. Even if attacks cease, shipping will not immediately resume. Confidence, once shaken, takes time to rebuild.

A credible reassurance effort would likely include limited naval escorts, at least initially. Notably, the United States did not move quickly to demonstrate confidence in the ceasefire by escorting US-flagged and crewed vessels out of the Gulf. Such a move would have sent a strong signal to the shipping industry, reinforcing the safety of transit and undermining Iranian suggestions that vessels require approval from its armed forces.

Given Iran's apparent interest in maintaining the ceasefire, it is unlikely that ships under US naval protection would have been challenged. The absence of such action has instead created space for Iran to strengthen its position — pushing vessels closer to its coastline and reinforcing its influence over how the strait is used.

THE ROLE OF INT'L PRESENCE

An effective reassurance campaign would also require a broader international effort. This would include enhanced surveillance, intelligence-sharing and rapid-response capabilities. The mere presence of such a coalition could help restore confidence among shipping operators.

There is precedent for this approach. The International Maritime Security Construct, established in 2019 following Iranian attacks in the Gulf of Oman, focused on coordination and transparency rather than large-scale convoy operations. A similar, albeit more robust, framework is likely to be needed again.

Such measures are not a silver bullet. Reassurance operates in layers, combining military presence, information-sharing and diplomatic signalling. Together, they can provide the clarity needed for commercial actors to resume operations.

Diplomacy will also be essential. Clear and coordinated messaging from the international community, backed by credible economic consequences for any renewed attacks, will play a key role in stabilising the situation.

THE TOLL QUESTION & LEGAL BOUNDARIES

Adding to the uncertainty is speculation that Iran may seek to impose a toll on vessels transiting the strait. Legally, the position is clear. The Strait of Hormuz is classified as an international strait under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which guarantees the right of transit passage.

Any attempt to charge vessels for passage would directly contravene this principle and set a dangerous precedent for other critical waterways.

There are already signs that Iran may be testing these limits. Reports of radio warnings instructing vessels to seek approval before transiting, along with suggestions of mandatory notification, point to an effort to exert greater control. Such moves should be firmly resisted. Allowing even limited restrictions to take hold would undermine the fundamental principle of freedom of navigation and could have far-reaching consequences for global trade.

If Iran were to pursue a toll system, it would likely face significant economic repercussions, including sanctions. The international community is unlikely to accept any enduring challenge to established maritime norms. —PTI

Iran is failing to open Hormuz: Trump

US President appears to strain ceasefire as negotiators meet in Iran with key queries

DUBAI, 10 APRIL

US President Donald Trump appeared to cast doubts on the effectiveness of the ceasefire with Iran, saying that they were doing a poor job of allowing oil through the Strait of Hormuz.

"Iran is doing a very poor job, dishonorable some would say, of allowing oil to go through the Strait of Hormuz," he wrote on his Truth Social on Thursday.

"That is not the agreement we have!" The post came after Trump posted earlier that "There are reports that Iran is charging fees to tankers going through the Hormuz Strait – They better not be and, if they are, they better stop now!"

Trump has also floated the idea of the US jointly controlling the Strait, through which nearly 20 per cent of the world's oil once flowed, but his European allies appeared dismissive of it.

His comments come as Iranian and United States officials were set to meet in Pakistan's Islamabad on Saturday.

At least 10,000 security personnel have been deployed in Islamabad, as the city has been virtually closed off.

Questions also remained over what will happen to Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium which is allegedly at the heart of tensions, how and when normal traffic will resume through the Strait of Hormuz, and what happens to Iran's ability to launch future missile attacks and support armed proxies in the region.

Meanwhile, the New York Times reported that the White House was "directly involved" in shaping Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's social media post where he requested the US President to extend his 7 April deadline on Iran for two weeks.

This comes as the "draft" tag in his post on the scial media platform X which sparked widespread speculation.

With Trump's 8 pm deadline for Iran was fast approaching, and "Pakistan was trying to orchestrate an off-ramp for both sides", the report claimed.

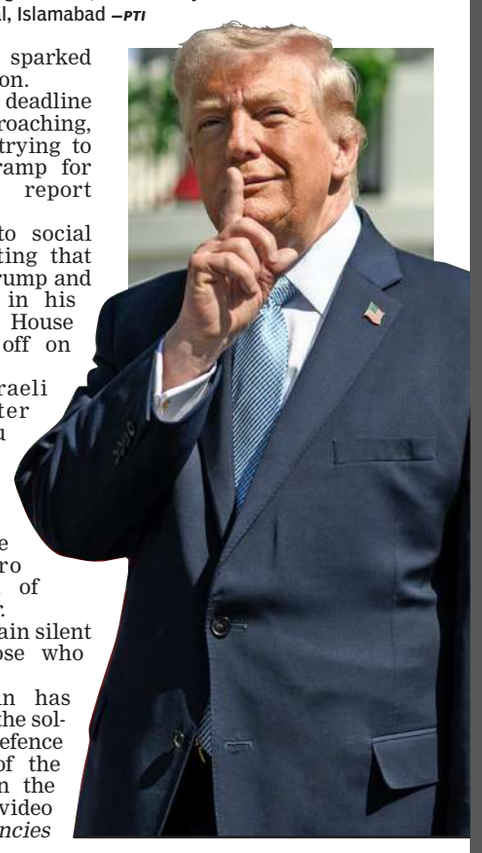
"So Sharif took to social media," it said, noting that Sharif had tagged Trump and other top advisers in his post. But the White House had already signed off on the post.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Friday that Spain will be cast out of peacekeeping efforts in Gaza over Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's criticism of the "illegal" Iran war.

"Israel will not remain silent in the face of those who attack us."

Adding that Spain has defamed our heroes, the soldiers of the Isreal Defence Force, the soldiers of the most moral army in the world," he said in a video statement. —*Agencies*

Soldiers stand guard at a checkpoint to ensure security ahead of the United States and Iran negotiations, to be led by US Vice President JD Vance in Pakistani capital, Islamabad —*PTI*



Don slams Tucker, Candace, Jones

Trump called prominent Right-wing media figures, including Tucker Carlson, Megyn Kelly, Candace Owens, and Alex Jones, "low IQ... loser... nut jobs" who are "not MAGA" on Truth Social, as his base has been increasingly critical of his support for Israel and the Iran war. He also mocked Owens for the legal fight involving the French First Lady's gender.

Settlers storm Al Aqsa mosque

Over 400 Israeli settlers attempted to storm the historic Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem on Thursday, shortly after it reopened after a 40-day closure amid security concerns. About 3,000 worshippers attended morning prayers in the mosque. During the closure, there were a record number of animal sacrifices in the third holiest site for Muslims.

Ukraine downs Shahed drones

Ukrainian military personnel have shot down Iranian-designed Shahed drones in multiple West Asia countries during the Iran war, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. He added that the weapons were similar to those used by Russia and in exchange, Ukraine is receiving weapons.

Irish fuel protests enter fourth day

Ireland's protests over high fuel prices entered a fourth day on Friday, sparking concerns about shortages and emergency services as demonstrators blocked access to refining and distribution sites around the country. The government is set to meet with farmers, truckers and contactors to discuss the crisis.

Pakistan's Asif calls Israel 'curse on humanity'; Bibi fumes

Smoke rises following Israeli airstrikes in Beirut, Lebanon, on Wednesday. At least 300 people were killed in the strikes over two days —*PTI*

JERUSALEM, 10 APRIL

Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif —*ANI*

Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on X that Israel was a "curse on humanity", and slammed the country for committing "genocide in Lebanon" as peace talks were underway in Islamabad. This prompted Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Office (PMO) to question Pakistan's role as a "neutral arbiter" for the negotiations.

"Pakistan Defence Minister's call for Israel's annihilation is outrageous," the Israeli PMO said on X. "This is not a statement that can be tolerated from any government, especially not from one that claims to be a neutral arbiter for peace."

Asif has since deleted his posted where he called Israel "evil" and said that "genocide is being committed in Lebanon" as negotiations were underway.

"Innocent citizens are being killed by Israel, first Gaza, then Iran and now Lebanon, bloodletting continues unabated," Asif had said. "I hope and pray that the people who created this cancerous state on Palestinian land to get rid of European Jews [sic] burn in hell."

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar also condemned Asif's comments, saying, "These blatant antisemitic blood libels from a government claiming to mediate peace."

"Israel will defend itself against terrorists who vow its destruction," Sa'ar said.

Indian media claimed that Pakistan Field Marshal Asim Munir intervened to get Asif's post deleted. Reports said that Munir told Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to "control his ministers". Salar could not verify the veracity of the reports. —*Agencies*

Saudi acknowledges widespread damage

RIYADH, 10 APRIL

Ras Tanura refinery in Saudi Arabia after an Iranian strike -*SCREENGRAB*

For the first time, Saudi Arabia has laid out the scale of damage inflicted to its oil output and exports. An Energy Ministry official said that attacks have cut oil production capacity by around 6,00,000 barrels per day.

A pumping station on the East-West Pipeline was among the hardest hit, cutting throughput by about 700,000 barrels per day, while outages at Manifa and Khurais reduced output by 600,000 more barrels per day.

Energy Ministry statement also said that one citizen working as an industrial security guard was killed and seven wounded, the first report of Saudi casualties.

Thursday's statement said strikes targeted production, transport and refining sites, as well as petrochemical and power facilities in Riyadh, the Eastern Province, and Yanbu on the Red Sea. The statement didn't attribute responsibility.

The major refineries, including SATORP, Ras Tanura and SAMREF, were also hit, with fires at Ju'aymah disrupting exports of liquefied petroleum and natural gas liquids. —*PTI*

Won't allow criminal aggressor to go unpunished: Mojtaba flays US

JERUSALEM, 10 APRIL

Iran's new Supreme Leader, **Mojtaba Khamenei**, vowed that the nation would not let "US-Israeli aggression" go unpunished.

Regarding the upcoming negotiations in Islamabad, Mojtaba told state media in a statement read by his representatives: "We will demand full compensation for every injury, blood money for the martyrs, and reparations for disabled veterans. Furthermore, we will certainly advance our management of the Strait of Hormuz to a new stage."

Mojtaba also declared victory in the West Asia war, praising the "courage and resilience" of the people and the armed forces in the face of foreign intervention.Warning that a ceasefire is not final, he urged the public to form human defence chains.

He noted that while the battlefield may be quiet, public presence in is crucial for favourable negotiation results.

"With our entire being, we have hope in Imam Mahdi's (aj) for a triumph over the enemy, both in negotiations & on the battlefield. We pray that both our adversaries & us will witness the miraculous effect of those prayers very soon," Mojtaba added. —*ANI*

Former Iranian FM dead in Israeli-US strikes

DUBAI/ TEHRAN, 10 APRIL

Kamal Kharrazi, former Iranian foreign minister, died on Thursday from injuries sustained in a strike that targeted his residence in Tehran, Iranian state media reported. His wife had also died in the same attack earlier this week, according to local state media.

Kharrazi was a senior figure in Iran's political establishment. He served as Iran's foreign minister from 1997 to 2005. He was heading the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, an advisory body established in 2006 that reports directly to Iran's supreme leadership and provides strategic guidance on foreign policy and international affairs.

In 2022, Kharrazi told Al Jazeera that Tehran has "the technical means to produce a nuclear bomb, but there has been no decision by Iran to build one".

Several officials and military commanders were killed in the West Asia conflict, notably including the former supreme leader.

As of now, both sides have reached a temporary ceasefire and agreed to hold further negotiations in Islamabad. —*Agencies*

Respite from fighting would be welcome for soldiers in the front lines in eastern Ukraine -*UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICE*

32hr ceasefire in Ukraine for Orthodox Easter: Putin

MOSCOW, 10 APRIL

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday declared a 32-hour ceasefire in Ukraine over the Orthodox Easter weekend, following an earlier call from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Russian forces will observe a ceasefire starting 4pm local time on Saturday until the end of Sunday, according to Putin's statement released by the Kremlin.

"We assume that the Ukrainian side will follow the example of the Russian Federation," the Kremlin said. But "troops are to be prepared to counter any possible provocations by the enemy."

There was no immediate reaction from Kyiv.

Zelensky proposed earlier in the week that each side stop targeting each other's energy infrastructure over the holiday, saying he made the offer through the US.

Previous ceasefires attempts have had little or no impact. Putin unilaterally declared a 30-hour ceasefire last Easter, but each side accused the other of breaking it. —*PTI*

SURPRISE STATEMENT

Melania denies Epstein ties or knowledge of his crimes

WASHINGTON, 10 APRIL

US President Donald Trump and Melania Trump (then Melania Klaus) with Jefferey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell in Florida –*x*

US First lady Melania Trump denied knowledge about late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's alleged crimes, saying on Thursday that the "stories are completely false".

She called accusations that she was somehow involved "smears about me" and said she had no relationship with Epstein and denied reports that he introduced her to Donald Trump.

"The lies linking me with the disgraceful Jeffrey Epstein need to end today," she said in a seemingly out of the blue message at the White House.

She did not go into detail on the accusations against her but said they came from "individuals and entities looking to cause damage to my good name and were "mean-spirited attempts to defame my reputation".

Of the examples she cited, the most recent was in October where book publisher HarperCollins UK apologised to the First Lady and retracted passages from a book suggesting Epstein played a role in introducing her and Donald. Melania insisted that she met her future husband at a New York City party in 1998.

Melania also called on Congress to hold a public hearing centred on survivors of Epstein's crimes, with a chance to testify before lawmakers and have their stories entered into the congressional record.

Melania insisted that she was not friends with Epstein or his former girlfriend-cum-associate Ghislaine Maxwell. —*PTI*

Taiwan people are Chinese: Xi to Taiwanese leader

BEIJING, 10 APRIL

China's President Xi Jinping on Friday told Taiwanese Opposition leader Cheng Li-wun in Beijing that people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are Chinese. Xi said that China will "absolutely not tolerate" independence for Taiwan and called for efforts for "reunification".

Xi said compatriots on both sides "need peace, development, communication and cooperation," expressing confidence ties would grow closer. Cheng, the Chief of the Kuomintang (KMT) called for building a "mutually beneficial" framework to avoid conflict and ensure lasting peace for "Chinese people on both sides of the Strait.".

China claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has intensified military and diplomatic pressure for reunification.

The meeting is being closely watched globally as Taiwan is expected to feature in US President Trump's upcoming talks with Xi, especially amid Washington's proposed USD 11 billion arms package to Taipei.

Cheng described her trip as a "journey of peace". —*PTI*

30 killed as drone strikes wedding in Sudan's Darfur

CAIRO, 10 APRIL

A drone strike on a town in Sudan's Darfur region hit a wedding party, killing at least 30 civilians, including women and children, the United Nations said on Thursday. The Emergency Lawyers and Resistance Committees said the Sudanese Armed Forces was responsible for the attack, the latest in an intensifying dronefare between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces who have been fighting for nearly three years. Last week, a drone attack allegedly by the RSF hit a hospital in the south-central part of the country and killed at least 10 people. At least 40,000 people have been killed in the war, though the actual toll believed to be several times higher, with millions displaced. —*PTI*

Venezuela passes mining bill; eyes int'l investments

CARACAS, 10 APRIL

Venezuelan lawmakers unanimously have approved a comprehensive bill to regulate mining, aiming to attract foreign investors to a sector long exploited by criminal groups. The law repeals mining regulations from 1999 and 2015 and allows domestic, foreign, state-owned and private companies or consortiums to exploit gold and "strategic minerals". It also bans high-ranking officials from holding mining titles. The legislation introduces royalties, taxes, and sets a 30-year cap on concessions, with renewal options, and includes penalties for illegal activities and environmental damage. The US has issued a license authorising certain transactions involving Venezuelan-origin gold as acting President Delcy Rodriguez has opened up the oil sector to Washington's companies. —*PTI*

— WIKIPEDIA

India's Saran re-elected to UN committee

NEW YORK, 10 APRIL

Veteran Indian diplomat Preeti Saran has been re-elected to the prestigious UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) for a fresh three-year tenure starting 2027, in recognition of her expertise. Ambassador Saran is currently serving as the chair of the CESCR. "I feel honoured to be re-elected member of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," she said. She noted that the committee comprises 18 independent experts monitoring implementation by state parties. "As the largest democracy in the world, the Indian growth story is exemplary," Saran said. She earlier served as secretary (east) in the Ministry of External Affairs and held several diplomatic assignments globally. —*PTI*

Djibouti votes as Prez expected to win 6th term

MOGADISHU, 10 APRIL

Voters in the small Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti cast ballots for President on Friday, with longtime leader Ismaïl Omar Guelleh expected to secure a sixth term in office after lawmakers scrapped presidential age limits last year. Guelleh, 78, has ruled the country of about 1 million for more than two decades. The results of the 2021 election showed him winning nearly 99 per cent of the total votes. He faces a single challenger, Mohamed Farah Samatar, in a race analysts say offers little genuine competition. "The scrapping of term limits in Djibouti is less about electoral competition," said Mohamed Husein Gaas, highlighting concerns over democratic backsliding and regional stability issues. —*PTI*

— FREEPIK

Rupee falls to close at 92.68 against USD

MUMBAI, 10 APRIL

The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day 17 paise lower at 92.68 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, weighed down by risks from the US-Iran conflict. Forex traders said the rupee witnessed high volatility as the deadline for the RBI's instructions to banks to curb their overnight positions to USD 100 million closes. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 92.58 against the US dollar, then touching an intra-day low of 92.76 against dollar. It hit the day's high of 92.41 during the session. On 9 April, the rupee settle at 92.51 against US dollar.—*PTI*

ADB increases India's FY27 GDP forecasts to 6.9%

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Friday projected India's GDP growth to remain "robust" at 6.9 per cent for the current fiscal year. It projected inflation to more than double from 2.1 per cent in 2025-26 to 4.5 per cent in the current fiscal due to a rebound in food prices from earlier declines, higher global oil prices, currency weakness, and rising precious metal prices. It projected inflation to ease to 4 per cent in the 2027-28 on account of lower oil prices and moderating food prices. The West Asia conflict may undermine India's macroeconomic performance through varied channels, including higher energy prices, trade flow disruptions, and weaker remittance inflows. —*PTI*

Power demand to rise 6% amid rising heat: Crisil

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Power demand is expected to rise by approximately 6 per cent this financial year. According to Crisil Intelligence. This spike is driven by the expected emergence of El Nino in July, which is likely to push up cooling demand due to higher temperatures and lower rainfall. In addition, steady economic growth and a low base are expected to support the rise in power consumption. The report stated that power demand is estimated to grow 5.5-6.5 per cent year-on-year in fiscal 2027 to reach 1,815-1,825 billion units (BUs). The report also highlighted recent trends, noting that power demand in March surpassed the 147 BUs recorded. This marks the highest March consumption since 2010.—*ANI*

Stefano Gabbana quits as Dolce & Gabbana chairman

MILAN, 10 APRIL

Stefano Gabbana has stepped down as chairman of the fashion house that he co-founded with Domenico Dolce, the company said on Friday. Gabbana's resignation from oversight roles was effective 1 January, The company called it "a natural evolution of its organizational structure and governance." Gabbana, 63, will continue in his creative role at the company. He was present at the last runway show in February, with their longtime muse Madonna as a front-row guest. Both he and Dolce greeted Madonna personally at her seat after the show and brought her backstage.

Dolce & Gabbana made its Milan runway debut in 1985, with a focus on Sicilian craftsmanship that has been a touchstone all along. —*PTI*

Markets rebound 1% on buying in financial counters

Sensex jumps 918.60 pts, while Nifty climbs 275.50 pts

MUMBAI, 10 APRIL

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged over 1 per cent on Friday, propelled by buying in banking counters and a positive trend in global equities.

Investor sentiment improved amid hopes of further easing in the West Asia crisis ahead of US-Iran negotiations and lower crude prices, analysts said.

After staying in the positive territory throughout the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex later jumped 918.60 points or 1.20 per cent to settle at 77,550.25. During the day, it surged 990.85 points or 1.29 per cent to 77,622.50.

A total of 3,360 stocks advanced while 945 declined and 144 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 275.50 points or 1.16 per cent to end at 24,050.60.

On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark jumped 4,230.7 points or 5.77 per cent, and the Nifty surged 1,337.5 points or 5.88 per cent.

Sustained buying interest from domestic institutional investors and selective short covering aided the upmove, Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Asian Paints, ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, InterGlobe Aviation, Axis Bank and State Bank of India were the major gainers. However, Sun Pharma, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra and HCL Tech were the laggards.

The BSE Small Cap Select index jumped 1.64 per cent, and the MidCap Select index climbed 1.50 per cent.

Auto jumped 2.75 per cent, Capital Goods (2.27 per cent), Consumer Durables (2.20 per cent), Industrials (2.19 per cent), Consumer Discretionary (2.18 per cent), Bankex (2.06 per cent), and Realty (2.02 per cent). BSE IT and Focused IT were the laggards.

The positive trend was led by buying in banking, auto and financial stocks, while IT counters saw some profit booking after TCS' financial results.

Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 1,711.19 crore on 9 April, while domestic institutional investors bought stocks worth Rs 955.90 crore. —*PTI*

Investor sentiment improved amid hopes of further easing of the West Asia crisis and lower cride prices—*REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE*

TCS shares drop 3% post earnings announcement

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Shares of the country's largest IT services company TCS, declined by over 3 per cent in morning trade on Friday after its March quarter earnings failed to cheer investors.

The stock dropped 3.25 per cent to Rs 2,503.45 on the BSE. At the NSE, the stock edged lower by 3.24 per cent to Rs 2,505.

TCS on 9 April reported a 12.22 per cent jump in its March quarter net profit to Rs 13,718 crore, supported by expanded profit margins. For 2025-26, its profit after tax increased to Rs 49,210 crore.

In the March quarter, its revenue from operations jumped to Rs 70,698 crore, while the same for FY26 jumped to Rs 2.67 lakh crore. —*PTI*

VEDANTA CHALLENGED BID

Jaypee founder backs Adani's acquisition of JAL assets

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Jaypee Group founder Jaiprakash Gaur on Friday threw his support behind the Adani Group taking over his insolvent infrastructure firm Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL).

Gaur expressed full confidence in Gautam Adani's leadership after rival bidder Vedanta Ltd's Anil Agarwal claimed that Gaur wanted JAL to be in the 'safe hands' of his mining conglomerate.

In November last year, the CoC of JAL approved Adani Enterprises Ltd's Rs 14,535 crore bid to acquire its assets through the insolvency process.

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Allahabad bench, approved the bid in March. However, the same has been challenged by Vedanta Group, which made a bid of Rs 17,926 crore, in the appellate tribunal NCLAT. The matter is currently being heard in the NCLAT, which had refused to put an interim stay on the NCLT's decision. Even the Supreme Court did not stay the NCLT order.

Noting that JAL "… has been a lifelong journey of conviction, perseverance, and nation-building..", Gaur extended his "heartfelt wishes" to the Adani Group.

The financial challenges that led to the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process have been difficult for all stakeholders.

Gaur highlighted that the Jaypee Group had built an institution that delivered iconic assets.

JAL, which has assets and business interests spanning real estate, cement manufacturing, hospitality, power and engineering and construction, was admitted to the CIRP in June 2024 after it defaulted on payments of loans aggregating Rs 57,185 crore.

Adani, Jaiprakash Gaur —*PTI*

Adani Enterprises got around 90 per cent votes from creditors, followed by Dalmia Cement (Bharat) and Vedanta Group .—*PTI*

The government is absorbing rising costs through oil marketing companies and increased domestic production —*PTI*

Govt extends bulk LPG allocation to key sectors

- Industries in key sectors will receive 70 per cent of their pre-March bulk LPG consumption, subject to a sectoral ceiling.

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoPNG) has issued an order to ensure the stable and continued supply of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for industrial use amid evolving global supply challenges.

In a letter to all secretaries of the Government of India and chief secretaries of states and UTs, Neeraj Mittal, secretary of MoPNG, stated that industries in sectors such as pharma, food processing, polymers, agriculture, packaging, paint, steel, metal, ceramics, glass, aerosols, foundries, forging, heavy water, uranium, and seed will receive 70 per cent of their pre-March 2026 bulk LPG consumption, subject to a sectoral ceiling of 0.2 TMT daily.

This builds on discussions from 16 to 27 March, with an additional 10 per cent linked to piped natural gas (PNG) reform milestones.

The approach promotes calibrated LPG distribution while encouraging gradual transition to alternative fuels.

Industries where LPG is a critical, non-substitutable input will be given priority in allocation, with exemptions from PNG connectivity requirements, ensuring operations remain unaffected.

The government is absorbing rising costs through Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) and increased domestic production.

States have been advised to implement the 2026 Petroleum Order and expedite the CBG policy. India's LPG imports fell by 45 per cent. —*PTI*

India must rethink West Asia energy reliance: ONGC boss

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

ONGC Chairman Arun Kumar Singh cautioned that India should no longer assume West Asia is a reliable energy source, citing the global instability triggered by the West Asia conflict.

He said that boosting domestic production is now critical.

India has relied on West Asia to meet nearly half of its crude oil imports, 30 per cent of its gas and 85-90 per cent of LPG. Singh says India must invest in strategic storage to guard against price and supply disruptions.

The six-week closure of the Strait of Hormuz—the primary shipping lane for Gulf countries—disrupted the export of crude oil, natural gas, and LPG. These resources are vital in several importing countries, including India, which had to prioritise the supply of gas.

Singh warned that a shifting global order and geopolitical tensions are undermining long-held assumptions about energy security. —*PTI*

INDIA-UK TRADE DEAL LIKELY BY 1 MAY

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

India's Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United Kingdom is expected to come into effect by 1 May, while a similar deal with Europe may be finalised by the end of the year, said Ravi Sam, Vice Chairman of Texprocil, during a business leaders' meeting in Coimbatore

Sam stated that Ministers are confident the UK agreement will be operational by early May, and Europe's by year-end, opening vast markets for Indian exporters, especially in textiles. He noted that the FTAs will benefit multiple sectors, providing relief amid global trade uncertainties, with the textile industry being a key beneficiary.

Sam highlighted that Indian businesses have long struggled with tariffs and anti-dumping duties in UK and European markets and expressed optimism that these agreements will improve their access.

He added that these negotiations mark a positive shift, with the government's proactive approach being crucial.

Meanwhile, Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said India is in discussions with at least 20 more countries to expand market access, building on nine FTAs already signed, which cover 38 nations.

He said that FTAs focus on high-income developed countries where Indian industries won't face direct competition. —*PTI*

Trustees back Tata Sons IPO listing

MUMBAI, 10 APRIL

A growing chorus within Tata Trusts is backing an IPO for Tata Sons amid regulatory uncertainty, rising capital needs and a widening divide at the top.

Tata Sons, classified as a core investment company, must list on stock exchanges under existing guidelines

With multiple voices supporting a market debut, the issue has moved beyond internal deliberations to a visible split within the Trusts.

This marks a shift in the promoter body's position, which has preferred to keep the holding company unlisted.

Venu Srinivasan became on eof the first trustees to publicly support listing Tata Sons.

Vijay Singh supported it too, saying that the group's future growth would profit from access to public capital and greater transparency.

The pro-listing camp is challenging the stance of Noel Tata, who favours keeping Tata Sons unlisted.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)had classified Tata Sons as an upper-layer NBFC, which carries a requirement to list.

The company has taken steps to reduce its NBFC exposure, but the regulator's decision is still awaited. A revised framework expected from RBI is likely to determine whether listing becomes mandatory or remains optional. —*Agencies*

Equity mutual fund inflows soar 56% to Rs 40,450 cr

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Equity-oriented mutual fund schemes witnessed a net inflow of Rs 40,450 crore in March, marking an increase of 56 per cent from the preceding month, reflecting sustained investor confidence in equities despite market volatility and heightened geopolitical tensions.

The inflows were largely driven by strong participation in Flexi Cap, Mid Cap and Small Cap funds, which together accounted for a significant share of the total net additions. Monthly contributions through systematic investment plans rose to Rs 32,087 crore from Rs 29,845 crore in the preceding month,

Equity inflows rose to Rs 40,450 crore in March from Rs 25,978 crore in February.

Within the equity segment, Flexi Cap funds led with net inflows of over Rs 10,000 crore, followed by Small Cap funds at Rs 6,263 crore and Mid Cap funds at Rs 6,063 crore. —ANI

AGE-APPROPRIATE CONTENT

Instagram rolls out stricter restrictions for Indian teens

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

This setting will also remove teens' ability to see, leave, or receive comments under posts. ANI Meta on Thursday said that its popular social media platform Instagram is taking a significant step towards ensuring a safer online environment for teenagers in India.

The platform is expanding its revamped teen accounts, inspired by movie ratings criteria for 13-year-olds and parent feedback. This move will provide content similar to content in an age-appropriate movie, by default.

Teenagers under 18 will be automatically placed into an updated 13+ setting, and they won't be able to opt out without a parent's permission. The new setting will hide or not recommend posts with strong language, certain risky stunts, and additional content that could encourage potentially harmful behaviours, Meta said.

The platform will proactively identify content that goes against its age-appropriate guidelines and use improved technology to enforce these rules.

Teens will no longer be able to follow accounts sharing age-inappropriate content.

The platform is also introducing a new setting called 'Limited Content,' to filter even more content from the teen account experience. —*ANI*

The platform is expanding its teen accounts, inspired by movie ratings criteria for 13-year-olds and parent feedback —*REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE*

RBI to conduct Rs 2L cr reserve rate repo auction

MUMBAI, 10 APRIL

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will conduct Rs 2 lakh crore variable rate reverse repo (VRRR) seven days later on 17 April to maintain liquidity in the banking system.

"In view of the surplus transient liquidity conditions prevailing now, it has been decided to conduct a VRRR auction on Friday," the central bank said.

The auction will take place between 2 pm and 2:30 pm and the reversal of these funds will take place on 17 April.

The liquidity in the banking system turned huge surplus on the back of maturity of government securities (G-Secs).

G-Secs worth Rs 31,329 crore have matured on 8 April. Further, maturities scheduled on 12 April and 17 April, are worth Rs 86,403 crore and Rs 34,791 crore, respectively.

Currently, the liquidity in the banking system is expected to be in surplus of around Rs 4.55 lakh crore.

The RBI will continue to be proactive in liquidity management. —*PTI*

Musk, Durov question WhatsApp's privacy norms

Telegram CEO Pavel Durov; Owner of X Elon Musk —*PTI*

TEXAS, 10 APRIL

Owner of X, Elon Musk as well as CEO of Telegram Pavel Durov have questioned the privacy practices of popular messaging Meta-owned platform WhatsApp.

Musk on Thursday posted on X "can't trust WhatsApp."

The billionaire entrepreneur's response comes in the light of a new US class action lawsuit, which claims that the Meta-owned app intercepted private messages of users despite its claims of bullet-proof end-to-end encryption and even shared them with third parties like Accenture.

In another post, Musk urged users to switch to X Chat for messaging and voice/video calls, saying it "comes with this great benefit of actual privacy."

Meta immediately hit back, rejecting these accusations and defending WhatsApp's encryption system.

"The claims in this lawsuit are categorically false and absurd. WhatsApp has been end-to-end encrypted using the Signal protocol for a decade so your messages cannot be read by anyone other than the sender and recipient.

In a social media post, Durov said, "WhatsApp's encryption may be the biggest consumer fraud in history. —*ANI*

Consistent PBKS face faltering SRH

PBKS are disappointed about sharing a point with KKR

MULLANPUR, 10 APRIL

A plucky Punjab Kings will back themselves against a star-studded yet inconsistent Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League here on Saturday.

Considering how they have started the season, PBKS must be disappointed about sharing a point with KKR in their last game due to rain.

Led by Shreyas Iyer, PBKS have come to symbolise what a winning unit should look like, whether it is chasing down a 200-plus total with ease against Chennai Super Kings in a sea of yellow or overcoming former champions Gujarat Titans on a tricky Mullanpur surface. They could have been on course for a third successive win against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens with Australian quick Xavier Bartlett wreaking havoc before heavy rain and a thunderstorm forced them to share a point with the hosts. As opener-keeper Prabhsimran Singh, fresh off a 500-plus run breakout season, put it, PBKS are focused on collective success over Orange or Purple Cap pursuits, a mindset reflected in Cooper Connolly's unbeaten 72 against Gujarat Titans and Vijaykumar Vyshak's growing impact with the ball.

However, the same cannot be said about Sunrisers Hyderabad, who, despite their reputation for explosive batting and big totals, have faltered this season largely due to top-order collapses as seen against RCB and LSG when the dangerous opening pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma fell cheaply.

Adding to their woes, SRH have seen little impact from the likes of Harshal Patel and Jaydev Unadkat. The batting efforts of Nitish Kumar Reddy and Heinrich Klaasen were among the few positives for SRH against LSG. The match starts at 3:30 pm IST —*PTI*

Pressure on Samson as CSK extend search for 2 points

Dhoni is yet to play this season due to a calf strain

CHENNAI, 10 APRIL

The seasoned opening duo of Sanju Samson and Ruturaj Gaikwad will be under immense pressure to perform as Chennai Super Kings extend their search for their first win of the season against Delhi Capitals in the IPL here on Saturday.

With three losses at three different venues, CSK have begun the season on an uninspiring note. Whether in batting or bowling, significant improvement is needed if they are to compete with rival teams.

The absence of Dewald Brevis has also impacted the balance of the side. The explosive South African batter is expected to make a comeback from injury against the Delhi Capitals. However, there is no clarity over the return of M S Dhoni, who is yet to play this season due to a calf strain.

The opening combination of Samson and Gaikwad needs to come good before things go out of reach for CSK.

Kartik Sharma too needs to step up in the middle, while Prashant Veer has done well in the lower order. The only batter who has shown consistency is Sarfaraz Khan, who has a point to prove this season.

It will be the second game of the season at Chepauk. PBKS had chased 210 comfortably against the hosts on April 3.

CSK take on Delhi Capitals, who would be hurting from their one-run loss against the Gujarat Titans in Delhi. The Axar Patel-led side knows the importance of momentum in a highly competitive tournament like the IPL and would be determined to compound CSK's woes with an all-round performance.

David Miller refusing the single on the penultimate ball to tie the game against the Titans would remain a talking point for the rest of the season, but that surely won't be discussed in the dressing room.

It could, however, play on the mind of the South African who backed himself to finish the game for his team but fell agonisingly short.

In Mitchell Starc's absence, Lungi Ngidi has done the job for the team by extending his frugal ways since the T20 World Cup.

KL Rahul got welcome runs with the bat after a couple of failures, leaving only Nitish Rana in the top order to make an impact. Match starts: 7.30 PM IST —*PTI*

DHONI-INSPIRED MUKUL RISES FROM '100-150 SIXES' A DAY TO IPL MATCH-WINNER

Mukul Choudhary grew up watching MS Dhoni finish games, dreaming of doing the same one day. At Eden Gardens on Thursday night, the 21-year-old rookie batter from Rajasthan turned that dream into reality with a stunning six-hitting display, helping Lucknow Super Giants secure a three-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders in a last-ball thriller. "I dedicate this to my father. Even before he got married, he always dreamt of making his son a cricketer. I also always watch MS (Dhoni) sir, the way he finishes. I also play at the same number, so I dedicate this to him," Mukul said after his heroics (54 not out from 27 balls; 2x4, 7x6). Behind that composure lies relentless preparation for hitting close to 150 sixes every day. "My genes are such, and I am naturally built in a way that there is power in my shots, and also, I do practice a lot. Every day, I hit around 100-150 sixes. For the last five-six months, I've been practising a lot, and that has come into me," he revealed. He also spoke about his Dhoni-like 'helicopter shot', which he used to hit Vaibhav Arora for a six in the 17th over. "I have practised that shot since childhood... I always liked that, and the way Dhoni finished (an inning). He used to hit a six even off a yorker. If you even hit that kind of a delivery for six, the bowler thinks about doing something different." That six-hitting ability, combined with belief, has already caught the eye of LSG coach Justin Langer, who had famously earlier said he could turn Mukul into one of India's "scariest" middle-order batters.

Khalin Joshi wins Andhra Open by four-shot margin

VISAKHAPATNAM, 10 APRIL

Khalin Joshi fired a two-under 69 to win the Rs 1 crore Andhra Open Golf Championship on Friday, sealing his seventh professional title dominantly here. The 33-year-old Bengaluru pro returned rounds of 68-68-70-69 to finish at nine-under 275, four shots clear of the field. The victory earned him Rs 15 lakh and propelled him sharply up the 2026 DP World PGTI Order of Merit. Chandigarh's Akshay Sharma (70-70-74-65), a two-time Tour winner, fired a course-record six-under 65 in the final round to surge from overnight 13th to finish runner-up at five-under 279 at East Point Golf Club. Joshi began the final round with a three-shot cushion at seven-under and closed with a two-under 69, mixing five birdies with three bogeys, to secure the title, his first in over 44 months.—*PTI*

Hockey India replaces coach Tushar with Tim

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Experienced Australian Tim White was on Friday named the head coach of India's junior women's hockey team by the national federation, replacing Tushar Khandekar, who was with the team since 2023. Hockey India did not specify the reasons for the change nor divulge the duration of White's contract. White recently served as the head coach of the Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons in the Hockey India League (HIL) in January this year. His coaching career includes stints in Belgium and Australia. Before he arrived in India, White served as the coach of Belgium's Under-21 women's team, guiding it to a bronze medal at last year's Junior World Cup.—*PTI*

Watkins strikes twice for Aston Villa in 3-1 win at Bologna

LONDON, 10 APRIL

Ollie Watkins scored twice, and Aston Villa beat Bologna 3-1 to move a step closer to the Europa League semifinals with its eighth straight victory in the competition on Thursday night.

Ezri Konsa scored the opening goal of the quarterfinal first leg just before the interval, heading home Youri Tielemans' curling corner kick.

Watkins doubled the lead early in the second half with a shot between the legs of goalkeeper Federico Ravaglia.

Jonathan Rowe reduced the deficit to one for host Bologna in the final minute before Watkins added his second in stoppage time.

Villa has reached the last eight in Europe for the third straight year and is fourth in the Premier League, on course to qualify for the Champions League next season. The return legs take place next Thursday. In a matchup of former European champions, Nottingham Forest took home a promising 1-1 draw from Porto.

Porto transformed early pressure into a goal after William Gomes tapped in a low cross from Gabriel Veiga.

It was all square just two minutes later when Porto's Martim Fernandes equalized with an own goal.

Spalletti extends with Juventus until 2028

Luciano Spalletti will stay on as Juventus coach after signing a new two-year deal, the Serie A club announced on Friday.

Spalletti will reportedly be earning five million euros ($5.8 million) a season from his extended contract.

"It's important that I tell you first before it becomes official that we have decided to extend my contract for two more years," Spaletti said in a video released by the club, which showed him speaking to his players.

Spalletti was brought in by Juve in October to replace the sacked Igor Tudor and charged with ensuring qualification for the Champions League. —*PTI*

MONTE CARLO MASTERS 2026

Zverev beats Fonseca to reach semifinals

MONTE CARLO, 10 APRIL

Alexander Zverev edged out Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca in three sets on Friday to reach the Monte Carlo Masters semifinals for the third time.

The world number three sealed a battling 7-5, 6-7 (3/7), 6-3 victory, setting up a last-four clash with either Jannik Sinner or Felix Auger-Aliassime. Zverev is targeting his first ATP title since winning in Munich 12 months ago. The German could also complete a career sweep of the clay-court Masters 1000 events, having previously won both the Italian Open and Madrid Open twice.

He has lost his past seven meetings with Sinner, although the Italian has never won a Masters title on clay.

Big-hitting 19-year-old Fonseca was playing in his first Masters quarterfinal but pushed his opponent for long periods.

Three-time Grand Slam runner-up Zverev broke in the 11th game and then served out the opening set to love, before breaking again at the start of the second. Fonseca reeled off four straight games from 3-1 down to tee up the chance to serve for the set, but he failed to take the opportunity.

The world number 40 found his rhythm in the tie-break, though, crushing a string of magnificent groundstrokes to force a decider.

But Fonseca could not maintain that level as Zverev improved. The 28-year-old broke in the sixth game and confidently served out victory, reaching his third straight Masters 1000 semifinal this year.—*PTI*

Joseph Sunny brace powers SC Delhi to a 3-0 win over NEU

GUWAHATI, 10 APRIL

Joseph Sunny scored a second-half brace to help SC Delhi secure a commanding 3-0 victory over NorthEast United FC in an Indian Super League match here on Friday.

The win marks SC Delhi's second consecutive victory of the season, lifting them to eighth in the standings with eight points, while NorthEast United FC slips to tenth with six points.

Joseph Sunny was adjudged Player of the Match for his decisive brace.

SC Delhi doubled their advantage just four minutes later with a moment of individual brilliance. Midfielder Abdul-Halik Hudu initiated the move with a lofted pass from deep, and Sunny timed his run to perfection, controlling the ball past his marker Dinesh before lifting a composed finish over the advancing Gurmeet Singh to make it 2-0.

NorthEast United FC head coach Juan Pedro Benali made two changes to his side, bringing back captain Miguel Zabaco in defence and introducing Ankith P in attack.

SC Delhi, under assistant coach Noel Joseph in the absence of suspended head coach Tomasz Tchórz, made one change, handing a start to Paraguayan striker Julio Rivas. —*PTI*

India wraps up a quick win against Mongolia in Billie Jean King Cup

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Away from the spotlight, India stamped its dominance with a 3-0 win against minnow Mongolia in the Billie Jean King Cup Asia/Oceania Group I tie to keep chances of advancing alive by the barest of margins in New Delhi on Friday.

Playing on Court 1 after three days of action on the Centre Court, India had little trouble wrapping up the day's proceedings in less than three hours.

Zeel Desai, put in by captain Vishal Uppal for match practice, drubbed 15-year-old Anu-Vjin Gantor 6-0, 6-0 in just 37 minutes for a winning start to her Billie Jean King Cup debut. Sahaja Yamalapalli followed suit, taking five minutes more for her win against 32-year-old Jargal Altansarnai by an identical scoreline. With Ankita Raina rested, Vaishnavi Adkar then teamed up with Rutuja Bhosale to complete the formalities 6-1, 6-0 in 48 minutes, as the matches had lesser intensity than a casual hitting session.

For Zeel, who pulled out of an ITF semifinal to join the Indian side at the last minute, it was a walk in the park. The few points that her opponent did manage were more due to errors from Zeel than her own efforts, sending the ball flying in all directions and barely able to garner enough strength. —*PTI*

ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Shetty slays world no.4 Christie to enter SFs

NINGBO, 10 APRIL

India's Ayush Shetty produced the biggest win of his career, stunning world No. 4 Jonatan Christie of Indonesia to enter the men's singles semifinals of the Badminton Asia Championships here on Friday.

The world No. 25 Indian kept his higher-ranked opponent under constant pressure with relentless retrieving and thunderous smashes to script a 23-21, 21-17 victory in a fiercely contested quarterfinal. Shetty, the reigning US Open Super 300 champion, will next face top seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand, the Paris Olympic silver medallist and 2023 world champion.

In their first meeting, Shetty appeared tactically prepared with coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama, who had earlier guided Christie in his corner.

The Indian matched his opponent shot for shot, unsettling him with sharp angles and disciplined defence.

Shetty led 2-0 and 5-3 early on before Christie wrested control, pinning him to the backline and engaging in flat exchanges to turn it around at 6-5. The Indonesian continued to vary pace and angles, putting pressure on the tall Indian to move ahead 9-6 and carry a three-point lead into the interval.

The 6-foot-4-inch Mangalorean responded well, quickly erasing the deficit. However, a string of unforced errors saw Christie surge ahead again at 14-11 and 16-13.

Shetty then forced errors from his opponent, who misjudged lengths and went wide while attempting to play to the lines, though Christie still held a slender 18-16 lead. Shetty clawed back to 18-18 after a net error and a wide return from Christie. The Indonesian earned two game points when Shetty hit long, but the Indian responded with a thunderous down-the-line smash and a sharp net winner to level and then earn a game point. —*PTI*

Manika Batra exits with Round of 16 loss

TOKYO, 10 APRIL

Indian paddler Manika Batra exited from the WTT Contender Taiyuan on Friday after losing to Japan's Miu Hirano in a Round of 16 clash.

World No. 36 Hirano blanked Manika 3-0 (11-9, 11-7, 11-8) in quick time, wrapping up the win in little over 26 minutes.

In the previous round, World No. 49 Manika defeated World No. 25 Miyuu Kihara 3-2 (11-8, 10-12, 14-12, 9-11, 11-7) in 43 minutes.

In that match, Manika led 6-2 in the second game after bagging the opener easily. However, Kihara managed to fight back, saving two game points before levelling the match. The Japanese player was on her way to steal the third game as well, as she won three points in a row from 8-10 down, but this time, the Indian held her nerve to eventually take a 2-1 lead in the fixture.

Kihara edged out Manika in a closely-fought fourth game, forcing a decider. From 3-3 in the fifth game, Manika dictated terms and converted her first match point to secure her maiden win over Kihara in their third meeting. —*PTI*